

AMBITION.

h/c



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013



"FOUR-IN-HAND."

"As he turned the corner, Ames reined in his fiery steeds with a hand of iron."

(Frontispiece.)

204
Feb. 1876

AMBITION;

OR,

THE LAUNCH OF A SKIFF UPON THE
SEA OF LIFE.

BY

EIGGAM STREBOR.

NEW YORK :

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR

BY LANGE, LITTLE & CO.,

1876.

COPYRIGHT,
LANGE, LITTLE & CO.
1875.

New York : Lange, Little & Co., Printers,
Nos. 10 to 20 Astor Place.

RBR
JANTZ
#337

THIS BOOK
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY

Dedicated

TO

JOHN F. TROW,

OF

NEW YORK CITY.



P R E F A C E.



S I have made one of the most prominent men of New York City my hero—I will explain the significance of the name “Ames Skiff.”

This young hero launches his tiny skiff upon the turbulent waves of the ocean of life—and therefore aims to steer her in the right course, and, finally, through his indomitable energy, succeeds in anchoring her in safety to the haven where he would be.

I really do not think that I have overdrawn the natural picture of life; and proud must be the quiet hamlet that sends a true hero into the world.

Let the sharp and venomous arrows fly thick

and fast from envious quivers around him, their poison will be drawn before they strike our true hero.

Although but a mortal, given to temptation as thousands of brave men, he has proved to the world that he possesses the true metal that makes the American hero.

For perseverance and energy he deserves the praise of the people, and of his political life I will let others speak.

With his faults I have nothing to do; *but the world knows* for a certainty that whatever the true hero undertakes he does in grand style.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAGNIFICENT FOUR-IN-HAND.

	PAGE
The iron will	15

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY HERO.

"I'd rather be a chimney-sweep than be made fetch water like a girl"	18
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GRAND CIRCUS.

"I will go to head-quarters myself"	22
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

AMES IN HIS NEW ROLE.

The vision.—The departure	27
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

AMES TURNS PEDDLER.

The ghost.	30
--------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE GHOST.

The miracle	37
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

RICHARD IS HIMSELF AGAIN.

PAGE

The sudden flight of Ames 44

CHAPTER VIII.

“HE TOLD ME NOT TO TELL.”

The love of a sister. 48

CHAPTER IX.

AMY SUTTON.

The business engagement. 51

CHAPTER X.

HENRY IN SEARCH OF ONE THING FINDS ANOTHER.

Meeting with the orphans.—Interview between Amy and
Henry. 54

CHAPTER XI.

THE PENN BROTHERS.

Sad news from sea.—The unexpected meeting 61

CHAPTER XII.

THE WEDDING.

The return of Ames.—The offer scorned.—“Sir, I am
an American” 64

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.

The poor widow's story. 67

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ARREST AND TRIAL.

The midnight alarm.—The circumstantial evidence 72

CONTENTS.

9

CHAPTER XV.

THE ARREST AND TRIAL.—CONTINUED.

PAGE

The trial of McMurdy. — Ames put upon the stand. —

The hasty departure 76

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BALL OF THE AMERICAN CLUB.

Love at first sight.—Meeting of Ames with his sister 78

CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE CLUB.

The re-union.—“There was three crows sat on a tree.”—

“’Tis past the witching hour of night”..... 82

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SURPRISE.

“My mother lives in Heaven, sir.”—Affecting meeting

between Mrs. Sutton and the stranger.—The meeting

between Henry DeBar and Frank Hardy..... 85

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

Full consent of Uncle Frank 90

CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERIOUS GUEST.

The quarrel. — “You have no right to dictate to me who I

shall love”..... 95

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BETROTHAL.

The ring that had been in the family for generations..... 100

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STEAMBOAT DISASTER.

The rescue of Ames.—His heroic conduct..... 104

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE CLUB.

PAGE

How they received the terrible news at the club.—The resolutions passed.....	107
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW THE SUFFERERS WERE RESCUED.

The steamer <i>Trenton</i> .—The recognition.—The arrival at Vicksburg	110
--	-----

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AVOWAL AND SEPARATION.

The sudden departure.....	113
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SUDDEN RETURN.—THE GLAD SURPRISE.

“Have you no word of welcome?”.....	118
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ALARM.—THE RESCUE AND ITS RESULTS.

The startling cry of “mad dog.”—Meeting between Ames and Annie Penn.—Love’s young dream.....	122
--	-----

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DOUBLE SURPRISE.

“I cannot be your groomsman, for I am myself engaged”.	128
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SAD HISTORY OF FRANK HARDY’S EARLY LIFE.

The stolen bank-notes.—The dismissal.—The temptation and rescue.....	135
--	-----

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SINGULAR MEETING OF UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

Ames’s delight at being the means of bringing about the meeting.....	142
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXI.

ASHTON MOORE MEETS WITH NOTHING BUT SURPRISES.	PAGE
“My sainted mother, dost thou look upon this scene?”— Maggie’s surmises.—“He’s got my name, so he must be some relation to me.”.....	146

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.	
The village children.—The flowery path.....	150

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GRAND RECEPTION.	
The brides at home.....	156

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROSA LYNN IN A NEW RÔLE.	
“For impudence she is promoted from dressing-maid to maid-of-all-work.”—“Never mind, I’ll be a grand lady yet.”.....	159

CHAPTER XXXV.

SIR EDWARD AT THE CLUB-ROOM.	
The toasts.....	164

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MASK BALL.	
The handsome Apollo and the gypsy fortune-teller.—The jealousy of Aurora.—The poor minstrel.....	167

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STORMY SCENE AT BREAKFAST.	
The three things which Rosa went to see at the ball.— Rosa’s indignation.—“When she gets to be a lady, I’ll call her so—not before.”.....	169

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ROSA AS HOUSE-MAID.

PAGE

Interview between Bert Howard and Rosa.—“ Ah ! did you tell me not to slam it ? ”—Bert’s perplexity 172

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SIR EDWARD’S RESOLUTION.

Sir Edward’s interview with Wallace.—His determination to visit Rosa 176

CHAPTER XL.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN SIR EDWARD AND ROSA.

The interruption.—The effect of playing a grand march.—“ I don’t know who I am.”—The reappearance of Bert.—“ Oh ! you’re talking in your sleep.” 179

CHAPTER XLI. •

SIR EDWARD RELATES HIS PROMISED STORY.

Sudden appearance of Rosa.—The strange discovery.—The miniature tells its own tale.—The finding of the lost pearl.—Rosa finds a protector in Sir Edward.—She is no longer Rosa Lynn the circus-rider, or the maid-of-all-work, but Lady Maud of Clifton Hall. 183

CHAPTER XLII.

THE FAMILY AT HOME.

The hasty summons.—The meeting between Lady Maud and her former mistress.—Rosa’s magnanimity.—Bert gains the prize 189

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

PAGE

- The recognition between Lady Maud and Ames.—The parting upon the ocean wave..... 194

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CONFLAGRATION.

- The heroic conduct of Ames.—The firemen's supper.—The toast to the hero.—The house of pleasure in the morning a mass of ruins at night..... 197

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

- The fatal missive.—Crossing the dark river..... 202

CHAPTER XLVI.

A FLYING VISIT OUT WEST.

- The fearful crash.—The wreck.—Again on the track.—Safe arrival..... 205

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE MEETING WITH OLD FRIENDS.—MELANCHOLY MEETING
WITH HENRY DEBAR.

- Untimely death of Frank Hardy.—Heartrending scene at the grave..... 208

CHAPTER XLVIII.

- THE MYSTERY OF MAGGIE'S BIRTH SOLVED.—THE HEIRESS.. 214

CHAPTER XLIX.

MILTON SMITH'S REWARD.

- Maggie is made happy in his great love..... 218

CHAPTER L.

THE GOAL OF HIS AMBITION REACHED.

PAGE

He is styled the prince of good fellows.—He looks after the comforts of the poorer classes.—And he undertakes nothing but what he goes through with in grand style.....	220
---	-----

CHAPTER LI.

CONCLUSION.

Our hero accepts a military position.—A flattering ovation.—“Long live our hero!”.....	223
--	-----





AMBITION.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAGNIFICENT FOUR IN HAND.

ONE afternoon in the summer of eighteen hundred and seventy, as I, with some lady friends, were crossing Fourteenth Street, my attention was attracted by the sudden approach of an elegant turnout. There were three gentlemen seated therein. With them I have nothing to do; my eyes were riveted upon the handsome driver. He was dressed in pure white, with a straw hat around which was a band of blue ribbon and a golden anchor in front; he looked as though he had just come out of a band-box, so neat and clean was he.

Well! all eyes were centered upon him, for he handled the ribbons so gracefully. As he came near the crowd which were crossing the street, he reined

in the four magnificent prancing animals with a hand of iron, and they soon were made to understand that they were in the hands of a master.

Now I must describe my hero. He was a man apparently thirty years of age, in the full vigor of manhood, with light hair which was a mass of beautiful curls, his eyes were as blue as the skies, and had the merry twinkle of the stars on a cold winter night, but his chief beauty lay in the mouth and chin; the latter was broad and manly, his mouth was partially hidden by a long silken light mustache, slightly curled at the ends. At times, when in deep thought, one would think that he was making up his mind to conquer the world, and again, when interested in anything, his whole countenance would brighten with a rare smile, or he would burst out in a hearty laugh, which would display a magnificent set of the whitest teeth.

The hands that had reined in those four fiery horses were small and well shaped, and soft as a lady's. No one, to feel the gentle pressure of that hand would think that his grip was of iron, but such was the grip of Ames Skiff; his bright genial nature brought around him many friends who would strew his pathway with roses, as it were, because he had plenty of that which the world worships, money! and without which we are nothing.

Now we must trace our hero from the beginning, and will find in him the true metal, for this man has made his own fortune, and is one of nature's noblemen.

I hope the young men of the present day will follow his example ; he believed in the words of the poet :

“ There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood,
Leads on to fortune.”





CHAPTER II.

THE BOY HERO.



WAY up among the mountains of the State of New York, lived a respectable but poor couple, with a small family of pretty bright children, among them a little curly-headed, laughing, meddlesome imp, who was the favorite of everybody.

There was no mischief too great for him to be the head of.

One day there was a group of little, healthy, dirty urchins, who were in a loud altercation about something, when one of the number stepped out with his sleeves rolled up in fighting trim, saying :

“ I’ll bet two cents that I can beat any of the crowd. Them that’s spilling for a fight, just come on ! ” and he planted one bare heel in the ground, spat in his hand, and halloed, “ Come on, I say ! ”

At that moment, a little fellow, dressed in gray, was seen running toward the group. He was hat-

less and shoeless, his pants were neatly patched, but with different colors. Yet the sunshine of his heart shone in his beaming face. He was

“Just as happy as a big sunflower.”

As he ran toward the group, the boys shouted, “Here comes Ames Skiff. He’ll fight with you, Tony!” and they parted right and left for the ring-leader to enter the circle, which he did, in fine style; but, much to the astonishment of his companions, he declined to fight on so slight a provocation.

As the boys gathered around him, he said, “Now, listen, boys! There’s a big show coming down here next week, and I want to make a name in the world before I die, and I’m just going to join that circus. You see if I don’t! By golly! but won’t I ride them there horses. I’ll bet my life that I can raise the wind, and you’ll all live to see me President of these United States, some day; that is, if you don’t jump into and kill each other right away!”

The boys sent up a tremendous shout, with “three cheers for Ames Skiff, our president that is to be.”

And Ames laughed heartily with the rest, and shook his curly head, saying, “Never mind boys, you can make as much fun as you please, but I’ll do the thing up brown!”

“ Ah, yes ! The thing is you won’t fight it up brown, will you, Ames ? ” said the boy who was ready for a free fight.

“ No, sir-ree,” said Ames. “ My mother told me never to fight if I could help it. Now, you see I don’t mind fighting for my own self, but when it comes to fighting for another boy, I say I ain’t to be found ; that’s it, now ! ” And, so saying, the non-combatant hero marched off with his colors flying, at this bloodless victory ; that is, with a piece of white cotton thrown over his head to shield him from the piercing rays of old Sol, which the breeze seemed to take a great fancy to ; for, it would lift one corner, and then another, seemingly to get a peep at the pretty bright curls underneath.

At a short distance, he was met by a little sister, who was crying piteously. Ames stooped and kissed the little one gently, and wiped her face with her white apron, which, when she saw the dirt that he had wiped off her face upon her clean apron, her tears broke out afresh, and she said :

“ Oh, Ames ! this is my span clean apron, and mamma will whip me if I get it dirty. Oh, o-o-o- ! ”

Poor Ames was overcome at seeing his sister’s tears, and kneeled in the dirt before her (in his span clean clothes) as his sister said, took her hands from her face, and with his own handker-

chief again wiped her face, and together they smoothed out the rumples in the wonderful apron, kissed her tears away, and marched off toward home with his precious burden in his strong, loving arms.

When his mother saw him coming, she called out, "Why, Ames, how often have I told you that you should not lug that great big girl about? She's nearly as big as yourself, and is plenty able to walk around. It ain't like she was a puny, sickly thing, nor nothing. Put her down, this minute, I say, and go along and fetch a pail of water!"

Ames swung his little sister around two or three times, much to that young lady's delight, then took up the pail and left the house. When he got to the spring, he sat down on the bank, crossed his leg, and holding on to his bare foot, said aloud :

"Well, this will never do for me. I am getting too big to hang 'round the house, and I'll not do it no longer. I'm just made up my mind to make a man of myself, and staying up here playing the girl, won't do it. I'd rather be a chimney-sweep than be made fetch water like a girl!" and as he heard his mother call him, he filled his bucket with the clear spring water, raised it upon his head, and wended his way homeward, where he arrived without accident, still thinking of being a great man.



CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE GRAND CIRCUS.

IN the early part of the following week, the great circus arrived; the spacious tent was pitched on fair ground; everybody for miles around was on the qui vive.

Ames's great day-dream seemed about to be fulfilled; he was determined to join that circus; and was one of the first to have a peep under the canvas. Then, his father gave him money to go with some boys, and he came home delighted, and soon prevailed upon his mother and father going, for, said he, "Oh! father, it is a bully thing, I tell you!"

Accordingly, the next evening, the whole Skiff family were seated under this great canvas.

The play was "The Black Statue," which delighted the little family, as well as all their neigh-

bors, who would not be behind the Skiff family, as they said.

When the play of "The Black Statue" was over, they brought out a little girl, in a beautiful short white dress, all covered with spangles, and a silver spangled crown upon her head; her hair, which was as black as night, hung down to her waist in great ringlets.

After she made her bow to the audience, she was lifted upon a jet-black pony, and given a tiny silver-mounted whip, with which she struck the animal, and he darted off at full speed. Presently, she arose, and stood upon one foot, with both arms stretched out, as if dancing. The audience held their breath, thinking every moment to see her fall to the ground, but of course she was well trained, and did not fall. After remaining in that position for some time, she stood on her tip-toes, with her arms over her head, and swayed backward, as if dancing on the stage. While in this strained position, the rustics could hold in no longer. But Ames was the first to break the spell, by clapping his chubby hands, when all joined in heartily, and the young beauty bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment.

When she was taken off the horse, and stood upon the platform bowing, and kissing her hand to

the audience, a tremendous cheer arose, and she was forced to ride the second time.

Then, several powerful and beautiful animals were led out, and men in tights leaped upon their bare backs, when off they went like the wind, through hoops covered with pink paper, and over ropes, while the clown stood in the center, with a fool's cap upon his head, his face painted hideously, and a whip in his hand, which he kept cracking at the horses as they flew by. In the meantime, saying something funny, that made everybody laugh.

Everything that was done in a great city was done in that little country place, to delight the people; their efforts to please were not in vain, for in every house, far and near, the praises of the wonderful circus of Van Amburgh were sung.

Well, the next morning, our gallant Ames turned up in front of the circus tent, where he lingered some time before he saw any one. When by and by, a little ragged boy hailed him with: "I say boy, what are you prowling about here for?"

At first our hero took no notice of him, and walked around the tent like some great Newfoundland dog, who seemed to say, "I can annihilate you at one blow;" but the little fellow seemed not to be in the least intimidated by his lordly scowl,

and kept in his wake for some time. When the patience of young Ames seemed to be exhausted, and he forthwith rewarded the pertinacity of his meddlesome friend, with a blow between his eyes, which staggered him at once.

When a man approached, whom Ames recognized as the clown of the previous evening, he stooped and raised the fallen boy, saying, in angry tones :

“How dare you strike this little inoffensive fellow?”

“Because he insulted me,” said Ames, drawing himself up to his full height.

The man took hold of him roughly, and said : “I’ll shake the life out of you, you little vagabond—yes, I’ll thrash you within an inch of your miserable life, you little blackguard ;” and the irate man shook his fist in the face of Ames, who stood with flashing eyes, and his fists doubled up, as if ready for the fray—his head thrown back in fierce defiance. He was a truthful picture of Young America.

The clown seemed pleased to see such spirit in the boy, and going towards him, held out his hand, saying : “Come, make friends my boy, I thought you were a coward, when you knocked down this puny lad, but I really believe, that you

would as leave pitch into me, if you had no crowd even to back you."

Ames turned from him, the scowl still on his handsome face, saying : " I'll just go to head-quarters ;" he turned upon his heel, and in doing so came face to face with Van Amburgh, who had witnessed the whole thing, unseen, himself. He addressed Ames thus :

" Well, my fine fellow, you are now at head-quarters, let me hear your petition ;" then, taking out his watch to see the time, he said, " I have yet a few moments to spare, speak quick and freely my lad," and he extended his hand, which was grasped heartily by young Ames.

" Now, sir, you ask me what I came here for. Well, sir, I have made up my mind to join your circus, if you will have me. I never was outside this place, and am anxious to make a name, but can't do it here, so I will go with you sir, if you please."

Van Amburgh seemed much pleased with the lad, invited him to see him again and left him.

The next day Ames called ; was received pleasantly, and the arrangements made to take him with the troupe when they left.

Ames returned home with a light heart, but no one knew of his intentions. When the circus left the last of the week, Ames was nowhere to be found ; he had gone with the circus.



CHAPTER IV.

AMES IN HIS NEW RÔLE.



MES soon endeared himself to all, especially to the little Rosa that we first saw in Van Amburgh's circus.

She looked up to him for everything ; he was her constant companion, and often rode around the ring with her to the delight of an immense audience—such as Van Amburgh was sure to draw.

Thus three years passed, and the brave lad had an opportunity of seeing the world. Whenever he rode or acted, it was with such ease and grace, that the whole audience applauded enthusiastically as he bowed his proud head in acknowledgment.

One night while Rosa was riding around, some mischievous boy threw a pack of lighted fire-crackers before the horse, which reared back immediately, then plunged forward fearfully. Ames was at his post in a second, threw himself before

the frightened animal, and held the bridle with a grip of iron. The audience held their breath in terrible suspense ; but, when they saw the courageous boy was safe, they arose en masse, and shouts of applause rent the air.

Ames lifted the little frightened child from the horse and carried her behind the curtain. But the people were not satisfied ; they shouted until he came out and stood before them, and made his first speech ; then the furore died out.

Neither the child nor Ames made their appearance again that evening. It was soon discovered that the boy had dislocated his wrist, and the physician said it would upset him for some time.

But the boy could not remain inactive ; he sold tickets while his wrist was weak, and, rather liking the handling of money, became ticket agent.

Rosa missed him very much in her rides. Yet he was with her a great deal ; he humored her in every whim, and they were still on the most intimate terms.

About this time there joined the troupe a great burly sort of a boy, who took special delight in annoying Ames. One day he approached the latter in a swaggering sort of way, saying : " I say, tow-head, I'd like to take a round with you. I'll bet you a quarter I can whip the d—l out of you ! "

Ames stood for some time looking at the boy, in silent contempt. At last he spoke : " Get out, you ugly dog ; when I fight it must be with my equal," and he turned his back upon the fighting puppy, amid roars of laughter from the crowd that had gathered to see the sport, for there were bets made that the " pet of the ring " could beat the great bully.

This so enraged the brutal fellow, that, in the twinkling of an eye, he hurled a great stone at the curly head of Ames, who dodged it in time, and deliberately walked over to the infuriated boy, and shook him by the shoulders, then walked slowly away. At this cool exploit a deafening shout rent the air.

After this everything gave way before him. Wherever he went, people would say : " That fellow has pluck enough ; mind, I tell you, he'll come out bright yet. I shouldn't wonder if he wouldn't be the President of the United States some of these days."

Many were the encomiums bestowed upon our hero, but he was entirely unconcerned, and went his way whistling, with his hands in his pocket.



CHAPTER V.

AMES TURNS PEDDLER.



SOME time after this, as Ames was sitting with little Rosa in one of the seats of the tent, he seemed to be in deep thought. His head rested in the hollow of his hand, and his eyes were riveted upon one of the benches, when he was aroused from his deep revery by Rosa laying her little white plump hand upon his head, and saying, gently: "What is the matter, dear Ames; does your head hurt you? Let me rub it for you, like I did the other day."

But Ames pushed her roughly aside, saying: "No, my head does not hurt, Rosa, and I don't want you to ask me any questions. I wish you would leave me."

The little girl threw herself down on the bench, and cried bitterly. For some time he took no notice of her, when all at once her sobs seemed to

reach his ear, and he arose and kneeled down beside her, took her hand gently in both of his, and begged her to forgive his rudeness. He wiped her eyes with her handkerchief, and kissed away her tears, then lifted her up tenderly. She placed her arms around his neck and sobbed aloud. Ames could not comfort her for some time.

When this paroxysm of grief was over, he smoothed her thick curls, and begged her to tell him what was the matter, that it was now his turn to question.

“Oh, it was because you spoke so cross to me just now. You know, Ames, that I have no one to love but you. My father has been dead for years, and my mother left me to the mercy of these people, who, I must say, have been very kind to me. Mr. Raymond, the ring-master, is just like a father, and when I was little he used to take me in his arms and cry over me ; he certainly must know something about my parents, don't you think so, Ames?” and the little orphan circus-rider smiled through her tears, as the boy patted her on the head, saying :

“Cheer up, little girl, I will always be your friend ; but I am thinking strongly about leaving here, I am getting too big to be lounging around. Now, Rosa, darling, listen,” and the boy seated Rosa

upon the bench, and kneeled upon one knee before her, holding her tiny hand, as he said: "I believe I was made for something better than this. As I was lying across my little pallet the other night, the moon shining brightly upon me, I saw a man approach my bed, his face was bright, as though he were smiling upon me. I kept my eyes fixed intently upon him, when he spoke, in a low, gentle voice: 'My lad, be truthful, be gentle, yet be bold; bear and forbear; turn your back upon your present vocation, it will lead to nothing; by the setting of the harvest moon hie thee away, take thy worldly store upon thy back, and travel over mountains and across rivers, before you attempt to rest; then you will be on the road to wealth. Farewell.'

"The man, or specter, whatever it was, vanished while I still gazed in speechless terror upon it. I sprang from my bed and rushed to the door, but found it securely fastened. I ran to the window, but saw nothing save the pale moon's beams. I then threw myself across my bed, but could not sleep, for this vision, or whatever it was, was before me constantly; and as the moon is on the decline, I must soon take my leave of all present and pleasant associations, and climb the steep and rugged hill of uncertainty, which I know is very difficult; but, notwithstanding, I must undertake

the task. So, my dear little girl, you must always think kindly of me ; and when I am a great man, I will come and take you to live with me, and you shall be my little sister." With these words of comfort to the little girl, the noble-hearted boy arose from his kneeling position, clasped her in his arms, and kissed her as tenderly as though she was his own sister, and bade her good-bye, cautioning her not to speak to any one of his departure, and he would soon let her hear from him.

Two days after this interview, Ames invested his little money in some light tin and metal ware, and, on the decline of the harvest moon, took his little worldly stock, and left that part of the country.

True to the prediction, he traveled over mountains and valleys, and in a short time he had to replenish his little stock, so great was the demand for his wares.

It must not be thought for an instant that Ames was standing still, either in age or beauty ; he had improved very much since we first met him. He was quite tall, and very compactly built.

Wherever he went he made quite a sensation among the rustic beauties. The young peddler was invited to all their entertainments. Nothing was complete without him ; and Ames became very proud of his popularity. Some would have it that

he was a prince in disguise, which joke he enjoyed hugely, for it made him the envy of all the young men. The girls declared that he was too gentle and graceful to be any common mortal, and all vied with each other in dress, to captivate the "Prince of Peddlers."

Although sorely tempted, Ames did not forget his little absent friend, Rosa ; often after the day's work was done, would he stroll along the side of some babbling brook, with his hands crossed behind him, thinking of the little circus rider, and wondering if she was well taken care of, and if she was thinking of him.

During one of his evening rambles, just as he neared the brook, he heard a terrible shriek, and a young girl darted past him with the rapidity of lightning ; her hands were thrown up, her hair was hanging loosely over her shoulders, and at a little distance, the cause of her terror was apparent ; this was a white-robed figure, flying past like the wind.

Ames cried at the top of his voice: " Stop, or I'll shoot," but the figure did not stop or heed the warning, and Ames, seeing the unfortunate girl leap into the water, turned his attention immediately to her. Although the brook (like all other noisy, babbling things) was shallow, yet he feared she had sustained severe injury in falling upon the stones, he

stooped down and gently raised the girl, who had fainted, laid her upon the grass, made a cup of his straw hat by filling it with water, and very tenderly did he lave her throbbing brow, for she was now conscious, and begged him not to let the ghost come near her.

Ames tried to calm her agitation as best he could, assuring her that in his belief there was no such things as ghosts.

"Oh! but I know it was a ghost," said the poor girl, "for I saw nothing until I got into Farmer Brown's woods, when something tall and white sprung up before me, with eyes glaring like two balls of fire, and I screamed and ran, and it ran too, and it followed me here; didn't you see it, Mr. Skiff?"

"Yes, I saw something white chasing you, but I thought it was somebody trying to frighten you. Now, if you are able, I will take you home," saying which, he gallantly offered his arm, which she timidly accepted, and in due time they reached home, without being molested in any way.

Soon the story of the ghost was circulated through the country, and the part that Ames enacted in this little farce, made him a hero.

So he came to the conclusion to leave the place, before the good impression had died out.

Therefore, when the farmer's, wife with whom he had been living since his advent among them, tapped at his room door, to announce breakfast, receiving no answer, cautiously turned the knob and entered the room, she found it empty. Seeing the bed had not been occupied, she ran down stairs hastily, and astonished the inmates of the kitchen with the news ; they stared in blank astonishment at the poor woman, who burst into tears, with the words : " Oh ! oh ! he must have been murdered, you know he was so venturesome, he didn't mind ghosts, nor nothing ; I'm sure he's got killed—Oh ! Oh ! Oh !" She buried her face in her hands, and wept aloud.





CHAPTER VI.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE GHOST.



HE news spread like wildfire, and, in a little time, the house was fairly besieged with persons eager to view the chamber where the hero had so often rested. And minutely did they examine the pillow, whereon rested his head, with its wealth of golden curls.

The walls were sounded, to see if they could find a hollow spot where a burglar could enter; but, finding none, the mystery seemed to deepen. They calculated the risk of a leap from the window; then they examined minutely the grass, directly under said window; nothing was discovered. Thus, the whole day was spent in idle conjectures.

Then Farmer Brown spoke up: "I say, lads, the only thing, and the best thing we can do, is to turn out in a body, with clubs and guns, and scour the woods; for maybe that that tarnal ghost has

something or other to do with this mysterious disappearance of young Skiff. It would be terrible to have a fellow run off with, and we left in ignorance of his whereabouts. So now disperse, and get your suppers, and with your arms in your strong hands, meet me here, and I'll lead you ; and I'll bet my best cow that no ghosts will follow us."

Accordingly, at the time specified, a large party of strong men set out to scour the woods. They had not proceeded far, when a sight met their gaze, which made their blood run cold. They had been led in that direction by groans and fierce imprecations, hurled upon some imaginary enemy.

When they reached the spot from whence these sounds proceeded, a horrible spectacle presented itself in the person of the ghost, who was stretched full length upon the ground, gnashing his teeth, and moaning piteously one moment, and the next, cursing and raving like a maniac. In his thin white hand, he held some light hair, which showed he had been in conflict with something material. When he saw the crowd bending over him, he shook this tuft of hair in their faces, and tried to rise, but fell back insensible. Then Farmer Brown suggested, that while in that state, he should be bound with strong cords, and conveyed to his house. When they laid hands upon him to

bind him, they thought they would let fall the sheet, but found, to their great astonishment, that he was entirely naked. They wrapped it strongly around him, bound him with cords, and carried him into the house, while a few went in search of the missing peddler.

When the party reached the old farm-house, they laid their insensible burden on the bed of poor Ames, and, upon examining the inanimate form, it was found to be terribly lacerated. The country physician was called in immediately, and instantly recognized the poor man as a harmless lunatic, the younger brother of Mr. Penn, the only aristocrat among the simple countrymen.

The doctor discovered that there was a severe gash near the right temple, and another one just behind the ear, which was bleeding profusely. He refused to staunch the flow, as the farmer wanted him to do ; for, said he : "This is the crisis. When he recovers, he will either be a raving maniac or a rational being ; but, in the meantime, have you found any trace of the fugitive, for the supposition is that he has fled ?"

At this moment, there was heard a heavy groan from the bed, and the doctor took the hand of the sufferer, and felt the pulse, when a pleased smile lit up his whole countenance, and he proceeded at

once to staunch the blood and bathe the face in vinegar. Soon the poor man opened his eyes, and fixed them intently upon the doctor, who asked, gently, "What is it, my poor fellow?"

To which he replied: "Where am I, sir?" The doctor was overjoyed when he saw that reason had resumed its sway, and told him that he had been hurt in coming through the woods.

He closed his eyes wearily, and seemed to sleep all through while his wounds were being dressed.

The doctor insisted upon Farmer Brown leaving the room; and, sitting with his watch in his hand, he awaited the result of his awakening. It was a good three hours before he awoke, and asked feebly for a drink, which the doctor immediately gave in the form of water dashed with brandy; he then inquired of the doctor whether his brother was there when he was thrown from his horse.

The doctor humored him in the belief that he was thrown from his horse, and sent a message forthwith to Mr. Penn to lose no time in coming.

When the news reached the great house, as it was called, they found the utmost consternation prevailing there. Some time elapsed before the messenger could make them understand that the young man was at Farmer Brown's and alive, for

they were under the impression that he had destroyed himself.

Mr. Penn and his oldest daughter immediately repaired to the farm-house, and were met at the door by Mrs. Brown, who took them forthwith on tiptoe up to the chamber where lay the beloved brother and uncle. The doctor placed his finger upon his lips in caution, and they entered in dread silence. Mr. Penn grasped the hand of the doctor, while his daughter approached the bed and took up the thin white hand of the sufferer, who awoke at the slight touch, and murmured "Annie!"

Annie was astonished at hearing her uncle call her name, and threw herself upon her knees, crying: "Papa, papa, uncle knows me!" and she hid her face in the counterpane and wept.

The poor man placed his hand gently upon her head, and said, "Why, Annie! I always knew you. Why do you weep?"

Mr. Penn approached the bed, took his brother's hand, and, at a look from the doctor, said: "Why, Will, I am glad to see you are so much better. You have been quite *ill*."

"Yes," answered the invalid, "I have had a severe fall. Was my horse killed, doctor?"

The doctor said, "Oh, yes; he was killed in-

stantly." And the poor fellow said that he was sorry, for he valued him highly.

Annie arose from her kneeling posture, and her father handed her a chair, and she sat holding her uncle's hand in one of hers, while with the other she smoothed back his glossy brown hair from his high marble brow, ever and anon imprinting a kiss thereon, and murmuring, "*God be thanked!*"

"Now, doctor," said Mr. Penn, "I'm thinking that your services will be required at our house; for, some time before your messenger arrived, my men brought in a strange youth, dreadfully bruised and unconscious. My wife and children did all in their power for him, and when we left, he had recovered consciousness, and said that he must proceed on his journey *immediately*. But my family insisted upon him remaining quiet. He seemed extremely nervous, and anxious to get away; but I had my suspicions aroused, so I administered a sleeping potion, and left him under its effects. When can my brother be removed, doctor?"

"Not for many days, I fear, Mr. Penn. He must be kept quiet for at least a week, and must not be permitted to see the woods, nor the chamber wherein he was confined, but we can leave him in good hands. I fear nothing serious now, if he

remains quiet. We will proceed to your house ;” and they left the house together.

When they entered the chamber of the youth, to the great astonishment of the doctor, he found Ames Skiff, the missing peddler, who, when he awoke, explained his sudden disappearance in this wise :

He said, that when he reached the woods he was accosted by this white-robed figure, and thinking it was some one playing a trick upon him, he grappled with him ; but soon, to his dismay, found himself with a madman. The struggle, he said, was terrible, and finally, with one sure blow with a piece of metal, he laid his antagonist prone upon the ground, crawled away from the scene of this deadly conflict, and, when at some distance, fell from exhaustion. When he opened his eyes to consciousness, he was in a comfortable bed, and a lady sitting by him, fanning and wiping the blood from his face.





CHAPTER VII.

“ RICHARD IS HIMSELF AGAIN.”

BY close attention and the tenderest care Will Penn—the poor, unfortunate lunatic, who played the part of the ghost, which nearly cost his life—(and yet that seemingly unfortunate affair was the means of making him once more a man among men), for the continual flow of blood that weakened him nigh unto death, caused reason to resume its sway, and in three weeks from the time of the occurrence, he was enabled to walk among men as their equal.

Great was the joy and surprise of the family, when he was ushered in their midst by his brother, who humored him in the delusion that he was thrown from his horse and very much injured, and the doctor would not allow him to come home until he was entirely convalescent.

They all agreed that the doctor was right, and they each in turn grasped the hand of Will Penn, and kindly seated him in a large arm-chair.

He had scarcely been seated ten minutes when Ames Skiff entered, and Annie introduced her Uncle Will to him.

Will shook him cordially by the hand—said he was glad to meet him, and the family were overjoyed at finding that Ames was not recognized by him as his antagonist of that fearful night.

The evening passed off pleasantly, and after the family had retired, Mr. and Mrs. Penn sat by the open window, when the following conversation took place :

“ I say, little mother ! my heart feels as light as the down of a thistle to-night—don’t yours ? ”

Mrs. Penn laid her white, well-shaped hand on her husband’s arm, and answered in a whisper :

“ Now, dear husband, you may judge my feelings by your own ; I am very light-hearted and happy, for only to think that after three years of fearful ravings on the part of poor Will (by a miracle, as it seems), to-night he stands before us a rational being ! Oh, have we not enough to be thankful for this night ? ”

“ Now, dear, I am just thinking how we shall reward this young fellow ; had it not been for his bold repulse and presence of mind, poor Will would

not now be a rational being. Now don't you think if I make him a present, he will go on his way rejoicing?"

"No, husband; I do not think it would be sufficient for such an act and such a young man; but, come, let us to bed, and dream on it." So saying Mrs. Penn arose and made preparations for retiring.

The next morning all the family were assembled at breakfast, with the exception of Ames. Mrs. Penn sent a servant to his room to ask if he was indisposed; the girl returned with a note in her hand, that she had found lying upon the dressing-table. The room had not been occupied since the night before. Mr. Penn took the letter, and read:

"MR. PENN:—I write these few lines to thank yourself and family for the kind consideration which has been shown to a poor peddler, who will always hold you in the highest esteem and grateful remembrance. Please do not think hard of me on account of my abrupt departure. I could not think of intruding longer upon your hospitality. Adieu.

"AMES SKIFF."

"Well, wife, this beats all for a poor peddler. There's good blood in that boy's veins. He's no

common lad, I tell you. But, this will never do. He must be richly compensated. We must find him, somewhere. He cannot have such a great start of us ; so, after breakfast, we will all join in the hunt, and bring the stag to bay."

Will wanted to know what the matter could be, when his brother told him that their young guest had suddenly departed for parts unknown, and that he was going to mount his fleetest horse and go in pursuit.

After breakfast, they went in pursuit of Ames, but it proved fruitless, and by dinner-time they returned, completely exhausted with the chase.

So ended the second disappearance of the gallant peddler.





CHAPTER VIII.

“HE TOLD ME NOT TO TELL.”



WE must now leave our hero to wend his way through the intricate windings of those dense woods and the narrow passes of the mountains alone, with his thoughts of ambition and the recollection of the thrilling adventure with the lunatic, on the first attempt to rid himself (as he thought) of a life of indulgence and pleasure.

It was now about four years since Ames left the paternal roof to catch a glimpse of the world. The morning after the circus left the little hamlet, search was made for him. The mother's quick eye noticed something painful in the countenance of the pet sister. She questioned the child closely, on several occasions, but elicited nothing; at last, the little one gave way to melancholy, and refused even her daily food. She became dreadfully emaciated. The doctor's services were

brought into requisition, when one day he kindly took her hand, and told her that if she did not tell him what was on her mind that his medicines would do no good, and she would die, and be buried down in the deep ground, and would never see Ames again. At this announcement the child became dreadfully agitated, and told the physician that Ames told her not to tell.

But the good doctor told her that she should be exonerated from all blame ; that it was to save her life that she must disclose the secret, and the blame would rest upon him.

So the poor frightened child disclosed the (as she thought) terrible secret, and the kind doctor assured her that no harm should befall her, that he would make it all right with her parents ; after which he administered a sleeping potion, and soon the poor little creature fell off into a doze.

The doctor went down in the kitchen, where Mrs. Skiff was hard at work, and relieved her mind of its anxious load, by telling her of the important secret the little girl had faithfully kept locked up in her heart, while her body was wasting away.

The great tears rolled down the poor woman's cheeks as she listened, for Ames was her favorite child.

The doctor tried to comfort her, by assuring her

that there was metal enough in the boy to make a great man some day ; that *he* was once with the circus, and had never regretted it.

When the news became generally known, the neighbors, of course, passed their several opinions. The majority, upon cool deliberation, were unanimous in the belief that Ames would make a great man, and that the little hamlet should be proud of such a lad.

The girls of the neighborhood were very kind to the child, and every day brought some little delicacy, and fresh flowers to set her neat little chamber off, and under this kind treatment she soon recovered. But when she was led over the places where she had last seen her brother, she would cover her face with her apron and weep aloud ; but, after a while, this wore off, and she resumed her usual gaiety.

One day a letter was received from Ames, telling his mother not to fear for him, that he was safe ; but it would be useless to look for him, as he did not intend coming home until he had made some money.

"Well," said the poor woman, "I must put my trust in the Lord, and wait."



CHAPTER IX.

AMY SUTTON.

IN the office of a prominent Western lawyer sat two young men, discussing the current reports of the day.

“I tell you what it is, Milton, if that fellow comes into the club, it will be the making of the boys ; for everything he seems to touch turns into gold. I was present when he won that heavy bet, last night ; and he coolly put it into his pocket, and as coolly lighted his cigar, and walked off, as though it was an every-day occurrence.”

Milton Smith drew his chair up in front of his companion, and leaned over towards him in a confidential way, saying, in an audible whisper : “Did you notice with what perfect sangfroid he took those papers from Peter Welch, that informed him of his heavy losses ?”

“I tell you, Milton, that he’s a trump worth

throwing; so we had better ingratiate ourselves into his favor at once, if we want to do anything with him."

"How old do you suppose he is?" asked Milton.

"Why, I should not take him to be over twenty at the farthest; but age matters little, it's the tact—the tact the man has, that I admire. We must edge ourselves in his way somehow," and as he said these words Henry DeBar arose and paced the floor uneasily, while Milton Smith still retained his seat in silence.

A timid knock was heard at the door and Henry DeBar shouted, "Come in," when a young girl entered. She was dressed very plainly, in deep mourning; the young men could not see her face, for she wore a thick veil; a thin black shawl was drawn tightly over her shoulders to keep out the intense cold. As she advanced into the room Milton arose immediately and politely offered her a chair.

When she had been seated some time, she asked in a sweet voice if Mr. DeBar was in. That gentleman, hearing his name mentioned, came forward and told her that he was the owner of that name, and would be pleased to serve her in any way. She said that she was looking for employment, and had been referred to him.

Henry stood before her, playing with his watch chain, trying hard to get a glimpse of her face, for he thought that a woman with such a sweet voice must have a pretty face. And the ruse that he resorted to was to ask her to give him a sample of her writing. He immediately placed pen, ink, and paper before her ; of course, she threw back her veil, and Henry gave a perceptible start when he beheld such exquisite beauty ; but when she took the old black kid glove off her hand, he was surprised, to say the least, at the symmetry and whiteness of it, as she took the pen from his hand.

After she had given him a specimen of her penmanship, she drew on the old glove and let fall her veil, much to the disappointment, of Henry, who was perfectly captivated with the fair vision. He examined the writing and said he was much pleased, and he would certainly employ her. She arose and thanked him ; then ventured to ask him if he would send the writing to her house, which he gallantly promised to do, and Amy Sutton took her leave, after giving him her address.



CHAPTER X.

HENRY IN SEARCH OF ONE THING FINDS ANOTHER.

IT was on a stormy day in December that Henry DeBar sat in his cozy office, reading the morning paper. The night before a most brutal and unprovoked assault had been made upon one of the "American Club" (of which Henry was a member) while going through an unfrequented place. The watchman, hearing faint cries for assistance, hurried to the spot from whence they proceeded, and found a man standing over the prostrate figure, with a long shining dirk-knife ready to strike the already lacerated victim. The watchman crept up behind him, and quick as lightning, threw the uplifted hand aside ; and the man did not stop to secure the weapon, but took the benefit of the time offered, and made his escape. The watchman called for help, lifted the wounded man, who was unconscious ; and with the help of two stout men carried him into the

nearest house, which was readily opened to receive the unfortunate. The ugly dirk knife was found and brought in the house also. A physician was called in and dressed the wounds, which were pronounced not fatal.

The next morning, the papers were teeming with the news of the "murder of Ashton Moore," and at an early hour, the house where the wounded man lay, was literally besieged by inquisitive people.

Henry DeBar was horrified; he laid down the paper and took from its peg his great brown overcoat, buttoning it tightly up to his chin, setting up the fur collar to protect his throat, and started out in the storm to find, as best he could, the place where his friend lay.

He had not proceeded far when he was accosted by a little girl, who touched him upon the arm with her thin wan hand, and, in a sickly, trembling voice, asked for a few cents to buy her starving little brother and sister food.

Henry was about to pass on, so deeply engrossed was he thinking about his friend, when he encountered a pair of the mildest blue eyes, one minute only, for the next they were closed, and the starving girl fell prone upon the frozen ground. Henry rushed towards her, but it was too late to keep her from falling.

There lay before the strong, well-fed man, a heap of rags, for it did not seem like a human being. The hand that had arrested his progress was a little attenuated thing; the features were pinched with distress and hunger. Around her slight figure was wrapped a piece of a shawl, and her feet were incased in a pair of thin slippers, tied up at the heel with a string.

Such was the little waif that Henry DeBar picked up in his strong arms, and carried back to his office, where he laid her upon four chairs that he made into a bed; he sprinkled her face with cold water and rubbed her little hands gently, until he was rewarded by seeing the child open her wonderful eyes, and look intently upon him. She essayed to speak, but was too weak.

Henry bethought him of some wine that he had in his closet, and he soon held a glass to the trembling lips of the little girl. To his great delight, she seemed to revive and wished to tell him something.

He kneeled before her, taking her little hand in one of his, while with the other he gently raised her head, saying: "Now, little one, tell me all you want to tell; I'll stand by you, don't be afraid."

"Sir, will you take me home? My little brother may be dead now. I came out this morning to get

a little something for him to eat, but everybody that I asked pushed me roughly off, and when I met you, I thought you were going to do the same. Oh! I am so thankful that you did not ;” and the confiding little half-starved creature clasped her hands together, and raised her eyes to heaven, saying : “ Oh, my mother ! why did you not take me with you when you left this world ! ”

Henry was deeply affected, for he had never been brought face to face with gaunt poverty before. He took the waif in his arms and held her little cold feet to the cheerful fire, until they were nice and warm, then he arranged her snugly in the chair, so that no accident would happen before he returned ; told her to lie perfectly quiet, and he closed the door gently and was gone.

When he returned he brought a thick pair of shoes, a nice warm pair of stockings, and a large warm cloak ; he then placed the little waif in a carriage which was filled with eatables, which made her open her blue eyes in astonishment. The great tears chased each other down her wan cheek, and the little head sank back on Henry’s breast, who told her that she should have a big brother now, as well as a little one.

By this time, they reached the miserable house. When the carriage stopped, Henry took the waif

in his arms and carried her up two or three pairs of old rickety stairs. When they entered a sad spectacle met his eye. Upon a pallet of straw lay a mere skeleton of a once beautiful boy. And on the bare floor beside him lay a little girl of three years, who had fallen asleep crying for bread, but not a crumb could be seen.

Henry had made provision for the little motherless ones. At the noise which the party made entering (for the coachman had brought the things out of the coach) the baby awoke, and immediately tottered to little Maggie, laughing and holding on to her; the boy opened his languid eyes, and uttering one word: "Sister," closed them again seemingly to all earthly objects.

The coachman, who was much affected, ran for fresh water, which Maggie told him where to find. In the meantime, she gave the baby some cake, which quieted her directly, for she was only hungry.

When the coachman returned, Henry dashed some water with brandy, which he had brought, and gave it to the poor boy, then washed his face and hands in brandy and water. The little fellow was soon resuscitated, and, seeing his services were no longer wanted, Henry gave Maggie a few dollars, and charged her not to go out again until she

heard from him. Seeing a good pile of chips in one corner he knew that they would not freeze, and he had brought enough with him for them to eat. So he kissed them all, and carefully descended the old rickety stairs. Henry did not go back to the office, nor did he go in search of the wounded friend. But the coach turned down a quiet street, and stopped at the door of a small, neat brown cottage. He stepped out, and knocked at the door, which was opened by our sweet friend, Amy Sutton, who blushed as he handed her his hand, for hitherto Henry had been very reserved with her. Whenever he would bring her writing, he would merely bow, and give directions about the work and leave.

Amy was surprised at his cordiality, and when he craved a few moment's private conversation, she wondered what it could be.

However, she was soon relieved of all embarrassment, for he frankly told her that he had assumed the responsibility of three orphan children, and begged her to leave off writing and take full charge of them. He said he knew it was a great responsibility, but he would compensate her well, and he knew that she would love the little family.

She promised that she would visit them with

him the next day ; he pressed the little hand, and with a God-bless-you, left the house.

At an early hour the next morning, Henry went in search of his wounded friend, whom he found in a precarious condition. Several members of the club had offered a large sum for the apprehension of the would-be murderer, but, as yet, no clue was found. It was certainly not for gain, for his watch and money were found upon his person.

We must leave this affair entirely surrounded in mystery, and see some other parties whom we have lost the trail of for some years.





CHAPTER XI.

THE PENN BROTHERS.



WILL PENN was sitting in the library one morning, before a cheerful anthracite coal fire, into which he was gazing as if he expected some one to leap out of it. His large Newfoundland dog, "Prince," lay stretched out upon the hearth-rug, his eyes were blinking at the fire, and every now and then he would lift his large, heavy ears, as though he heard a far-off step.

Presently, Will Penn said : " What is it, Prince? Is he coming ? "

Prince arose slowly, and shook his shaggy coat, then approached his master and laid his head upon his knee. Will patted him fondly, when suddenly Prince sniffed and whined, then gave a bound towards the door, and scratched and howled to get out.

By this time Will's quick ear caught the sound

of carriage wheels. He opened the door quickly, when Prince sprang out of it, and dashed down the road, barking furiously, while the voice of his master was heard saying : " What is it, Prince ? what is it ? "

At that moment a loud report of a gun rang out clearly, and Prince came back limping and howling most piteously.

When he saw his master, he laid down at his feet, as though he was dead.

Just then the carriage drove up, and as a gentleman alighted, Prince (who was only playing possum) leaped upon him. The gentleman patted him kindly, and the next moment was folded in his brother's embrace.

Thus was Mr. Penn welcomed to the ancestral hall, after an absence of two years.

Soon everything was in confusion. The family were all ready to greet the noble-hearted man. His wife sobbed aloud upon his bosom, for no one expected ever to welcome the master home again.

Three months previous they received the sad tidings that he had died at sea, and was buried deep down 'neath the ocean wave, and the unhappy family had mourned him as dead, therefore they rejoiced as though he had come from the jaws of death.

The face of Will wore a smile that had not been seen there for years ; and as they were seated at the tea-table, he informed his beloved brother that he was going to marry Miss Clara Howland, the regal beauty and belle of S——.

Mr. Penn was greatly pleased at this intelligence, for he had no fear of the return of the terrible malady which had seized his brother years before. He knew him to be generous, loving, and brave, and any woman might be proud to call him husband.

Mrs. Penn inquired of her husband, some days after his return, if, in his travels, he had seen anything of the lad that had brought such happiness to their household.

He shook his head, and said, sadly : “ I am afraid he met with an untimely death ; for no one saw him after the morning Will came home to us.” So the subject of Ames was dropped, as Mr. Penn said that he would like to offer a reward for him.





CHAPTER XII.

THE WEDDING.



THE stone church was crowded to excess on the morning of the marriage of Will Penn, for both the bride and groom were known far and near, and beloved. They were kind to the poor, who were ready to strew their pathway with flowers.

The church-clock struck eleven, as the wedding party wended its way up the aisle, and stopped in front of the altar, where the father of the bride gave his beautiful and only daughter to the keeping of the noble Will Penn.

After the solemn rite of matrimony was over, they kneeled before the venerable minister, who had held the bride in his arms (as an infant at baptism) twenty-eight years before ; and now he spread his hands over her to bless her as a bride. The blessing had been pronounced, the happy couple

received the congratulations of their friends, when a young man made his way to where they were standing, and Mr. Penn grasped his hand and exclaimed : " It is Ames ! it is Ames ! "

Immediately all was in confusion. Everybody pressed around Ames ; for it was the gentleman in person.

Will was one of the first to welcome him, for his brother had already told him that when he fell from his horse, Ames rescued him, and Will was always ready and willing to show his gratitude, he therefore cordially grasped his hand, and invited him to join the bridal party at his home, which Ames gladly accepted, for he had his eyes fixed upon the gentle Annie ; and when he offered her his arm, she blushed and thanked him kindly, so Ames knew that he was not forgotten.

The day wore off pleasantly, and, long after the guests had departed, Mr. Penn, Will, and Ames were seated in the library, when Mr. Penn questioned Ames about his affairs.

Presently Will said : " Ames, I owe you a debt of gratitude ; may I pay it now ? "

Ames said quickly, " I was not aware of any such debt, sir. "

Mr. Penn said : " Ames, I hope you will take no offense ; but will you accept the small sum of three

thousand dollars to enable you to lay the foundation of a fortune?"

Ames stood up and leaned upon the back of a chair, saying, with spirit: "Sir, I acknowledge your kindness, but will not accept your offer. I am an American, and thus far have earned my own living. I commenced life as a circus boy, but now I am proud to say that I have amassed quite a comfortable sum. Think no more, gentlemen, of your indebtedness to me; it was paid while I lay helpless under your roof. I am now doing well in a Western city, and nothing brought me here but to get a glimpse of my sweet and gentle nurse, Miss Annie, and by your permission I will take my leave early in the morning."

So saying, they all arose, and bidding each other good night, separated, when in the morning Ames departed as mysteriously as he had come.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE HAPPY FAMILY.



VHEN Henry DeBar called upon Amy Sutton, she met him with a bright smile, and he gallantly handed her into the carriage, which, after he had seated himself by her side, was driven rapidly to the miserable abode of the orphans. Amy shuddered as she ascended the rickety chairs. When they reached the door Henry tapped gently, but receiving no answer opened it softly.

A happy sight met their gaze : before a bright chip fire sat Maggie in a wooden rocking chair, with the little baby in her arms, singing and rocking, while the little one caught her face in its hands every time she went back. The boy lay upon the pallet, a bright red spot upon each cheek ; his eyes were large and mournful, but they were earnestly fixed upon the little figures in the chair.

Henry and Amy stood upon the threshold, and gazed intently upon the little orphans. When Maggie looked up she gave a scream of surprise and delight, put down the baby and ran towards Henry, who folded her in his strong arms, then placed her hands in those of Amy, introducing her as the lady who was going to take them to a new home. He then went to the boy, who raised himself upon his elbow, and grasped the friendly hand.

Amy soon made friends with Maggie and the little prattling baby, while Henry called upon the woman who rented the room. She told him a sad story of the family :

“About two years before a poor widow with a young baby rented the room, and paid the rent for one month, when the little family were installed in their new home ; she took in sewing, but soon consumption sowed its dreadful seeds, and it became apparent that the poor woman was not long for this world. The neighbors were kind-hearted, and they divided their little store, and gave her all their spare time, for they had to work very hard. Nothing could be done to save her life, and within the year she died, and was buried by the corporation.

“I let the children stay, but the landlord urged

me for the rent ; said he should put us all out on the street. When I told him it was the poor dead woman who owed it, he came several times, and at last got mad and made an officer come in and take everything and sold it. The boy took on dreadful, and now you see it is all that brute's fault—so it is," and the poor woman wept. "I've took care of them poor little children, and didn't know nothing about that child going begging, until she told me last night what a good friend she had found."

"Now, my good woman," said Henry, who was much affected, "how much rent do you want?"

"Oh, sir, do you think I would be so mean as to take a cent from them; motherless children—they're welcome to the wretched home—I only wish I could do better by them, I thank the good Lord for sending them such a kind friend."

"I know those little ones will pay you for your trouble ; may God bless you and them too."

He thrust a note in the good woman's hand, as he grasped it to thank her for the miserable shelter she had given the children, and without which they would have fared worse.

Before the astonished woman could reply, Henry was gone.

When he came back in the room, he told Maggie whatever little thing she wanted to bundle up in a

counterpane, and he would send for it, but they must all come with him in the carriage.

He lifted the boy gently, and dressed him in his rags, then wrapped him in a quilt and carried him to the carriage; then went back for the baby, when he met Amy with the little one in her arms, and Maggie with her arms full, trotting along by her side, laughing and talking. Henry took the baby and placed it in the carriage; soon the rest entered and were driven to their new home.

The delight of the children was very great when they saw their cheerful home.

Mrs. Sutton was much affected by the story of the orphans, and resolved to rear them as her own children, saying that God had given them in place of those he had robbed her of, for she had none but sweet Amy.

After this Henry was a constant visitor, for, said he, laughing, "Have I not a family? I feel two feet taller than I did last year."

He performed his part nobly. The poor widow could not keep the children, but as Henry incurred the expense of board and clothing until they could help themselves, they were well taken care of.

Henry thought it was too much for Amy to write

and take care of the children, so he allowed her the same and did the writing himself.

Now, as the children have found a mother in Mrs. Sutton, an aunt in Amy, and an uncle in Henry, we will leave them, to look after the wounded man.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE ARREST AND TRIAL.



ASHTON MOORE lay moaning piteously, but was still unconscious. People came in upon tiptoe and stood around the sufferer's bed. Bills were posted about offering a reward for the would-be assassin. The dirk-knife was closely examined, and bore evidence of having a name erased from the handle ; but, by some chemical process, the name was brought out in bold relief—G. F. Mattson.

When it became known, every one was shocked, for Mattson was the bosom friend of the wounded man, and had been absent from the city for three weeks previous to the assault ; but, unfortunately, returned that very evening, and was seen in company with Ashton. All that could be done was to arrest him and await the recovery of Ashton.

Great was the consternation of Gilbert Mattson when the officer entered his room and arrested him ; and great, indeed, was his indignation at hearing that he was accused of so foul a crime. Although he strenuously denied the charge, and wept bitterly at the fate of his friend, the officer had no pity, for the tempting bait was constantly before his eyes. He led him off in triumph, rudely pushed him to his cell, like a criminal, and left him, to report that he had the assassin in custody awaiting the morning light, so he could be brought before the magistrate.

When Henry was made aware of the facts of the arrest of their mutual friend, his indignation knew no bounds. He found several members of the club around the magistrate pleading for the release of the prisoner, but the old man was inexorable, and pointed to the circumstance of the dirk with the name upon it.

After their ineffectual attempt to rescue their friend, the young men repaired to the club-house to discuss the matter in question, where, to their great surprise, they found Ames Skiff, who had returned from his flying visit to the little village of M—, where he witnessed the wedding of Will Penn.

Ames had been an eye-witness to the assault.

He arose and warmly grasped the hands of the new-comers, and bade them be of good cheer, for he alone was enabled to clear their mutual friend.

"But where have you been all this while, Ames?" inquired Henry DeBar. "Come, give an account of yourself, old boy, or you may be arrested next."

"Oh, never fear for me, I can easily swear an alibi. Now let us part, for by my faith, we will want our breath as long as we can keep it; but, to change the subject—where is Milton?"

"Oh, he has been down with the typhoid fever for some time," said Henry DeBar.

Here they were interrupted by a messenger from the sick-room. Ashton became conscious, and the first person that he called for was Ames Skiff.

The doctor sent for the young man immediately, thinking that he could unravel the mystery.

In due time Ames arrived, the wounded man recognized him at once, and beckoned to him feebly.

Ames approached the bed, took his friend's hand, and leaned over him tenderly, to catch his faintest whisper.

"I saw him, Ames, don't let him get away; he took those papers. Gilbert! Gilbert! why have you forsaken me!" cried the poor man.

Ames tried to make him understand that his friend was called suddenly away, and did not know of his illness, but directly he arrived, he would bring him to him.

It seemed not to comfort him, and the doctor, seeing his extreme agitation, came forward, laid his hand gently upon Ames's shoulder, and told him to step aside ; then he gave Ashton a sleeping potion, and he soon fell off into a doze.

When the doctor questioned Ames closely he said that he would answer any interrogation in the court room, but did not feel at liberty to answer individuals.

Every attention was paid to Ashton, and in three weeks he was able to attend court.

When Mattson stood up to answer the charge, Ashton gave a terrible shriek, and fell senseless to the floor. All was confusion in a moment, while some gentlemen carried the lifeless form of Ashton out of the room.

Ames's eyes fairly blazed with indignation, as he saw the prisoner fall back pale and trembling. He look keenly at an officer who stood by, and gave a signal, when he tapped a young man upon the shoulder, and said in a loud voice : "McMurdy, in the name of the law, I arrest you for assault with intent to kill."



CHAPTER XV.

CONTINUED.



WHEN the arrest was made, people were so surprised, they stood speechless for some moments.

McMurdy was a handsome young man and an acquaintance of Ashton Moore ; he moved in the first society, but was well known to have an ungovernable temper.

The prisoner was placed at the bar, and all was silent as the grave, when Ashton was brought in and confronted him.

Ames Skiff was immediately placed upon the stand and testified to the fact, that as he was passing a certain place, his attention was arrested by hearing a loud and angry altercation ; being familiar voices to him, he stood under the awning of the store, to shelter him from the storm, which was then raging.

After waiting some time for the persons to come out, the cold became so intense that he was forced

to seek shelter and warmth in the little grocery, and some time elapsed before he again made his appearance. He stood at his post a little while, listened attentively, but not hearing any sound of voices, he buttoned his coat up closely, and set forth to weather the storm. He had not proceeded far, when the cry of murder struck upon his ear, and he hastened to the spot, when, to his horror, he saw the prisoner bending over the fallen man, turn the body over, and snatch a bundle of papers, and was about to strike another blow, when a watchman approached, and threw the uplifted dirk aside. Throwing up his hands, the prisoner leaped from the grasp of the watchman and escaped.

Upon being confronted with the wounded man and Ames, the prisoner confessed his guilt and exonerated Gilbert Mattson, saying that he found the dirk in an old desk that Mattson once had in his office.

The meeting between Gilbert and Ashton Moore was affecting in the extreme.

Upon the recovery of his papers, Ashton withdrew the charge, and Clarence McMurdy soon left the scene of his disgrace.

It was a long time before poor Mattson recovered from the shock; but time is a panacea for all ills.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BALL OF THE AMERICAN CLUB.

N the night of the twenty-second of February following the assault, there was a grand ball given in honor of the occasion. The Apollo Hall was most tastefully decorated with flags and flowers. The wealth and beauty of the growing city was well represented.

Ah, why this confusion? It was caused by the entrance of our young hero, Ames Skiff, with a lovely fair-haired girl leaning upon his arm. His face was beaming with good humor, his honest blue eyes twinkled with pleasure. He had neither mustache nor whiskers, and therefore one had a full view of his magnificent teeth, and the bewitching dimple in either cheek, that made his countenance look for all the world like the sun bursting out from under a cloud.

As the handsome couple advanced into the room, they became the cynosure of all eyes, and it was whispered, "I wonder who the fair one can be?" and "Isn't she lovely?" "Why have we never found this out before?" "Ah! Skiff is a sly fellow, anyhow. He generally monopolizes the beautiful," and all such sayings went round the room, unheeded by Ames and his companion.

Now, let us see who this young lady was that caused this commotion.

A few weeks previous to the ball, as Ames was passing down the principal street, his attention was arrested by hearing his name called by a sweet, musical voice. Turning quickly, he found himself face to face with the speaker, and simultaneously they issued the words :

"Brother!" "Sister!" He clasped her to his breast. After the first rapturous feeling between the brother and sister had subsided, Ames drew her hand within his arm, and led her to his home, where she remained in private, until she burst upon our sight in all her maiden beauty, in the ball-room, as a bright meteor, to the utter surprise of everybody.

No one, of course, had ever seen her before that night ; but we have, for this is the same little one who had kept the secret of Ames's running

away with the circus, until it nearly cost her life.

But, to proceed. Ames was very proud of his sister, for she was the very embodiment of grace and refinement, and was dressed with exquisite taste. Her robe was of black velvet, with low corsage ; her ornaments were diamonds, which was a present from her proud brother. For, be it remembered, that he is no longer a peddler, but a junior partner in a large house in C., and has gained this exalted position by his indomitable energy. But, again I am digressing.

The brother and sister joined the set that was now forming ; and, in fact, led off the dance, after which Ames found her a seat, where they enjoyed a nice little tête-à-tête, when, on looking over the multitude of familiar faces, he recognized his friend, Ashton Moore, and, excusing himself, mingled in the crowd, and was lost to view for some moments, when he reappeared, arm in arm with the handsome Ashton, whom he introduced to his sister.

After a little pleasant conversation, Ashton prevailed upon her to dance, and giving a hint to Ames to select a partner for himself, he took the queenly Eliza in triumph away.

To say that Ashton admired Eliza Skiff would be saying very little. He was completely capti-

vated, and as he escorted her to her carriage, he pressed her hand gently, with the promise (at Ames's invitation) to call the next day.

When the carriage rolled off, Ashton re-entered the ball-room, but found there was a blank before him. He roamed about like something lost, and soon took his leave. When he arrived at home, he found that he was minus that most essential article, a heart.





CHAPTER XVII.

AT THE CLUB.



WELL boys, 'tis now ten o'clock ; and he has not deigned to honor us with his presence as yet," said Henry Debar, as he leaned back in his chair and looked at his old-fashioned but magnificent watch—an heir-loom of his family.

"Now, Henry, you are well aware that this paragon of yours has a time and will of his own. He gave us his word that he would meet us here to-night ; let that suffice. You know he'll keep his word, if it is midnight ; so let us pass our time in singing and praying, if it will be agreeable."

At this last clause of the speech of Milton Smith, there was a general burst of merriment. Just then, the door was flung open, with a quick hand, and our hero made his appearance, followed by Ashton Moore. It was soon noticed that they were in evening costume, and, to the surprise of all,

said they had just come from the house of a mutual friend, who had stolen a march upon them by having a quiet wedding, and only those two gentlemen were privy to it.

After the excitement of their arrival had subsided, they drew their chairs around the table, and were engrossed in conversation which I will not attempt to follow, as it is business. As they arrived at a definite conclusion, it is none of my affair.

They had been seated thus, for at least two hours, when Ames looked at his watch and gave a low whistle of astonishment, and sprang to his feet, saying, "By Jove! I had no idea it was so late."

In an instant every one had his watch in his hand, and each asked the other: "What of the time?"

Henry Debar cried out, "I'll bet that not two of our watches will run the same."

"Done!" said Ames, and the others bet likewise. True enough, no two watches run the same, so Henry won the bet, and coolly put the money in his pocket, saying, laughingly:

"Well, brethren, let us sing the doxology and close the prayer-meeting."

With this they all arose, and Henry gave out:

“There was three crows sat on a tree,
As black as any crows could be.”

“Sing, brothers, sing, in long metre,” continued Henry, and they sang out clearly; and, apparently overcome with the excitement, sank quietly into their chairs and remained so for some time.

When the town clock struck one, Milton Smith started up stealthily, approached the table, and gave three loud knocks, exclaiming in tragic tones:

“’Tis past the witching hour of night.”

They all sprang to their feet, rubbed their eyes as though they had been asleep, and made good their escape through the door which was held open by Henry Debar. They separated at the door, each to dream of

“His castles in the air.”





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SURPRISE.

EARLY in the month of May, when Nature had donned her robe of green, and Spring had decked her head with flowers (which were fresh with the morning dews), and made them glisten like so many diamonds, a little rosy-cheeked girl, and a delicate boy might be seen early in the morning, gathering flowers by a little babbling brook, on the outskirts of the city of C.

One morning, while the children stood by the brook, throwing stones into its clear depths, they were accosted by a tall, elegantly dressed gentleman, who inquired the name of the little girl, as he handed her a beautiful flower.

"My name is Maggie Ashton," said the little girl, who was none other than our little friend whom Henry DeBar had saved from starving on that cold December day.

The gentleman gave a perceptible start as the little child emphasized "Maggie Ashton."

He repeated mechanically, "Maggie Ashton," "Ashton, my little girl? where does your mother live?"

"My mother lives up in heaven, sir. Did you know my mother?" and Maggie raised her large blue eyes up to his face.

The gentleman sat down on the bank of the stream, and leaned his head upon his hands, apparently in deep thought. Maggie crept up to him and laid her chubby hands upon his knees, saying, softly: "What makes you so still; don't you want me to stay near you? Must I take my brother away?"

The stranger clasped her in his arms, pushed back her long, beautiful hair, and throwing her head back, scrutinized her features keenly. When he seemed satisfied, he kissed her several times, and cried: "Yes, 'tis she, 'tis she, oh! I am at last repaid, thank God." And the poor man wept like a child, as the boy and girl kneeled before him, trying, in their childlike simplicity, to comfort him.

Maggie arose from her kneeling posture, and stood before the bent figure, saying, like a little woman:

"Well, I don't know what you mean by that

—'tis she, 'tis she! but if you will just come home with us, my auntie will tell you that I am Maggie Ashton, and nobody else, and this is my brother, Ernest Ashton, and I've just got a baby sister, and her name is Lulu Ashton; and our mother has been dead nearly two whole years."

"There, there, my little one, I will go home with you—come!" and the stranger arose, gave each of the children a hand, which they took, and in this way they reached the house.

Kind Mother Sutton had just started in search of the children, who had overstaid their time, but as she saw that they had company, and she had not been seen by them, she went in another direction to make some necessary purchases before entering the house.

As they neared the house, Maggie released herself from the hand that held her, and darted in the open door, screaming at the top of her voice, "Auntie, auntie, do come here! I've caught a big fish—do come, quick;" Amy came running out of the kitchen with her sleeves rolled up and her hands full of flour, crying "Where is it, darling?" and before she was aware she ran against the stranger, who gave a start of surprise.

Amy raised her eyes to his face, and gave a

scream, and would have fallen had not the stranger caught her in his strong arms.

When Mrs. Sutton returned, she found all in confusion. Amy was stretched upon the sofa, the children crying and calling upon auntie, dear auntie, to awake.

And the stranger kneeling by the side of Amy, bathing her temples with vinegar, which the servant had brought him.

When the children saw her they ran to her, crying, "O, Mamma Sutton, he's killed auntie, he's killed auntie," and they both screamed aloud. Mrs. Sutton led them from the room and closed the door between them, but she could hear them still moan and cry, "My auntie, my dear auntie."

When Mrs. Sutton returned the stranger arose and uttered one word, "Millie". She rushed into his arms and cried out, "My long lost brother." Thus, after years of separation, those two loving hearts were re-united. Poor Amy, in the meantime, recovered to be the witness to this scene. A groan from the sofa arrested their attention, and Frank Hardy left his new-found sister to attend to his lovely niece. He lifted her gently and placed her upon her feet, when she threw her arms around his neck and wept upon his breast.

In the meantime the children were admitted, and

were overjoyed at having a new uncle. Maggie cried, wildly : " Oh, I am so glad you did not kill my auntie."

Soon Frank Hardy was left to amuse the children while the mother and daughter made ready the breakfast, which had been forgotten during the excitement of the unexpected meeting, but all enjoyed so much at the proper time.

" Now," said Frank, after he had heard the tale of the suffering children, " they will suffer no more while I have a dollar. She lives over again in Maggie." But Maggie could not comprehend what he meant.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE ENGAGEMENT.



WHILE the happy family yet lingered around the tea-table that evening, there came a well-known ring at the door, when Maggie rushed from the table saying, "There's Uncle Henry," and opened the door to admit Henry De-Bar, who, of course, had been a constant visitor since the introduction of the children. Amy arose and blushing welcomed him, then turned to her Uncle Frank and introduced him as the children's protector, when the little magpie of the family spoke up quickly and said: "Uncle Frank, Uncle Henry is auntie's beau, ain't that funny?"

At the child's remark poor Amy crimsoned; but Henry laughed at the shrewdness of his protégé, while he shook hands with Frank, and assured him that he was much pleased to make his acquaintance.

In the meantime the officious little Maggie had turned up an extra plate, which was always placed for Henry, and taking his hand pulled him to his seat. He never could find it in his heart to rebuke the little motherless thing. His whole soul seemed to be wrapped up in her. He often vowed that, come what would, he never would part from her. His love was reciprocated, for her quick ear could discern his step among a hundred afar off, and her great eyes would beam with delight at his coming. When he was not there at a certain time she would neither eat nor sit down, but would pace the floor, and, every now and then, watch from the door until she saw him coming; then the change that would come over the loving little grateful thing was truly marvelous. Thus she showed her love for her kind protector; the boy loved him none the less, but was less demonstrative.

As Maggie seated Henry, she took her place next to him, much to the amusement of Mr. Frank Hardy, who said that he wished that it was he instead of Henry, to the delight of that young bachelor, who gave a sly look at the head of the table, where sat the presiding divinity, in the act of pouring out his tea.

Well, Henry partook of a hearty meal, after which he took Maggie upon his knee, and let her

pull his mustache and side-whiskers to her heart's content. She would put one little finger upon each of his eyes, and then call out : " Now, uncle, you can't see me."

When the tea-things were all cleared away, they were joined by Mrs. Sutton and Amy ; but, much to the latter's surprise, Henry insisted upon having a private conversation with her, that there was a matter of vital importance to settle. Amy arose and led the way into the neat little parlor, where she wheeled an arm-chair in front of the window ; but, to use a vulgar but appropriate phrase, Henry couldn't see it, for he gently put his arm around the fragile form, and clasped her to his bosom, much to the astonishment of poor, blushing Amy, who could not articulate one word.

" Be not frightened, by birdie, my intentions are honorable, I'll assure you ; come, sit you down, my lady fair." And he gallantly led her to the sofa, and seated himself beside her, saying : " Now listen, Amy, I am about a tale to unfold that may, but it should not surprise you in the least. It is this, not a very new story, to be sure, to the world, but for me to say that I love you (there, it's out), it is ; now, what have you to say in return, my Amy ?" and the impudent fellow actually took her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

Nothing was said for some time, when Henry whispered : " Come, my darling, what do you say to my uncouth wooing ; shall I, or shall I not wear the jewel that I so highly prize ? "

Amy hid her blushing face in his bosom, while he murmured : " Bless you, sweet one, I am answered." He raised her head gently, and imprinted his first kiss upon her pure brow, then took the little white hand again, and slipped a brilliant solitaire upon the engagement finger.

Amy ventured to say : " Oh, Henry, you have forgotten that I have a mother and uncle to consult, and—and—that I am only a poor girl. What will people say ? "

" Why, Amy, dear, am I not able to fight against public opinion, so long as I have you as a reserve ? And, as for your mother, she loves me as a son already ; and, darling, then this orphan boy will find a mother too," and he gave her a long, passionate kiss, then carried her before her mother and uncle, who were playing games with the children. Mrs. Sutton was surprised, but gave her full consent ; and Frank said, if he were to judge from outward appearances, it would certainly be in his favor, and the two shook hands cordially.

When everything was settled, Henry kissed the baby, whom Mrs. Sutton held in her lap, and

Maggie hung around his neck, kissing his face and eyes, good-bye, as she said.

As the clock struck ten, he took his leave, and as Amy gave him her hand at the door, he stole a kiss, and before she could remonstrate, he was gone.





CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERIOUS GUEST.



IN a luxuriously fitted up chamber, upon a crimson velvet couch, reclines a young girl of some sixteen summers. Her face is oval, and marvelously fair, while it is framed with a profusion of glossy black hair, which nearly reaches her feet, in rich waves. Her coral lips are slightly parted, just enough to display her pearly teeth. Her eyes seem to be dark wells of mystery; they are fringed with long, heavy lashes, which partially veiled their mysterious depths.

Thus, silently, she remained for some time, when some new thought seemed to possess her, and she arose hastily, looked at her little jewelled watch, tapped her tiny foot impatiently upon the rich velvet carpet, murmuring :

“Why, oh, why, does he tarry so long! It is now past his usual hour, and yet he comes not.”

Hark! that is most assuredly his step, and she

struck a listening attitude. As the step approached the door, she quickly resumed her listless position upon the couch, and in the next instant the door was softly opened, and Ames Skiff stood with the knob in his hand, gazing at the beautiful sleeper (as he thought) in admiration.

As she did not stir at this interruption, he cautiously advanced towards the couch, and bending gently over the fair vision, he imprinted a kiss upon her marble brow.

At the touch of those lips, she started to her feet in seeming indignation at the intruder, but when she saw Ames standing penitently before her, the cloud of indignation passed away, and she smilingly extended her white jewelled hand for him to kiss, which he did in gallant style (as he did everything). Now, I must say that Rosa Lynn (for it was the little circus-rider) was a most consummate actress, as we shall see.

When Ames seated himself beside this queen of beauty he thought of her only as a sister ; and, taking her little hand pressed it playfully ; then, lifting the mass of black hair put it around his shoulders, saying that he knew that now he had a strong halter around his neck.

“Would it break the proud neck to have it for life ? ” said she, archly.

“Well, yes ; I fear it would, little Rosa. I never intend to wear a halter around my stubborn neck,” and Ames laughed heartily as he stole another kiss from the ruby lips. But, to his utter surprise, she pushed him rudely from her and stood with flashing eyes and heaving bosom before him, saying, angrily :

“Beware how you trifle with me, Ames Skiff ! When you were a poor circus-rider you gave me your protection ; but now that you are a junior partner, you insult me !”

Ames leaped to his feet in a moment and confronted her, his blue eyes fairly emitting flames of fire.

“Why, Rosa Lynn ! what mean you ? Did you ever know me to offer an insult to a lady ? Speak truly ! or, by heaven, I will leave you this moment, never to set eyes upon your fatal beauty again.”

Rosa quailed before the angry flashes of fire from the blue eyes of the hitherto passive being at her side. When she found that he had indeed thrown off the halter from his neck, she thought it best to conciliate him ; therefore, she placed her hand upon his arm, looked up in his face, and said :

“Ames, let us be friends ; I was mad—mad with

jealousy when I spoke to you of insult. Oh, you can never know the terrible pang at my heart, every time I saw you walking or riding, when this fair woman was by your side. And still, Ames, you told me that you would never be fettered or wear the halter of matrimony."

"Ah, is that the cause of this outburst?" said Ames, as he removed the little hand. "Then, let me ease your mind, Rosa. That fair creature is my idolized sister."

Rosa gave a start, and screamed out :

"Your sister! Ames, dear Ames, forgive, forgive, me!" and she fell in a dead faint at his feet.

Poor Ames was a little frightened at the turn affairs had taken, but had presence of mind enough to lift the inanimate form, and place it upon the couch, when he bathed her brow in water, and rubbed the little cold hands.

As he was kneeling by her side, she opened her eyes, and fixed them upon him intently.

"What is it, Rosa?" asked Ames. "Can you sit up now?" and he placed his hand under her head, and raised her up gently, saying :

"Now, darling little one, it is growing late, and I must leave you, but do not want to leave you in this condition."

"Oh! you need not fear now. I have completely

recovered. But, Ames, let me hear from your lips that you are not angry with me ; that you love me still," and she hid her face upon his shoulder, and wept.

Ames tried to soothe the trembling girl, by saying: "Rosa! I have often told you that I loved you as well as I do my own sister. Is not that sufficient? It is the only love that I can give. Will you not rest upon that love? Now, cheer up, little one. You shall never want while Ames has a dollar in this world. Now, bid me good-night, and promise me that you will be a good girl;" and he led her towards the door, kissed her, and was gone.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE BETROTHAL.



WHILE Ames was passing a stormy evening with Rosa, quite a different scene was being enacted beneath his own roof. The spacious drawing-room was well filled with the young people of his set. He had been one among the gayest during the first part of the reception ; but, remembering his promise to Rosa, at a certain time, made good his escape.

As he always did things up in fine style, so it was on this occasion. The trimmings were of gold and crimson. The handsome mirrors reflected the gorgeous dresses of the ladies, as they whirled past in the dance. In the centre hung a magnificent chandelier, which made the scene dazzling and grand in the extreme. Delightful music filled the room.

This party was given by Ames to his sister on the eve of her departure for home ; and many of

the young people who had formed her acquaintance brought little gifts of affection, which the fair recipient acknowledged in fitting terms.

Eliza looked regally beautiful that night. She wore a dress of dark blue silk, trimmed with point lace. Her jewels were pearls. Her golden hair was braided and bound around her head in Egyptian style.

Very proud was Ashton Moore, as the beauty leaned upon his arm, while they promenaded the room, the observed of all observers.

Ashton drew her attention to a divan near the window, which was partially hidden by the drapery, and whispered : " Come, dearest, I have a secret to impart. Will you not lend a listening ear ? "

" Will it not do as well, dear Ashton, to tell it under the gas-light ? " said she roguishly, tapping her fingers with her delicate pearl fan, a present, by the way, from the lordly Ashton Moore.

By this time they had reached the seat in question, when Ashton gallantly seated his lady fair, and, toying with her fan, she bent her imperious head and listened to his oft-repeated declaration of love.

When she raised her head, he saw that her face was suffused with blushes, as she tremblingly said : " Mr. Moore, I hardly think that you can mean all

you say, for the simple reason that there are so many fair ones more worthy of your love than I."

"Nay, Eliza! I have weighed you in the balance and found you 'not wanting,'" said Ashton, bending his proud head to catch her answer. "Say that you love me, and that you will take me for better or worse, and I'll rest content."

The blushing girl replied, in the faintest whisper, "I do love you."

Those few words were enough for Ashton. He took the little unresisting hand in his, and the almost inaudible words, "God bless you," were heard only by herself.

As she thought it a duty to her guests that she should not absent herself so long, she prevailed upon her lover to mingle again in the crowd.

"Just draw off your left glove, Eliza, dear. I want to tell my fortune."

Eliza drew off the dainty glove, when he slipped a brilliant cluster diamond ring upon it, saying, proudly: "Thus I chain you to me for life."

"Oh, Ashton!" she exclaimed, "how is this? I only said that I would always love you, and, perhaps, some day we might be united. Do you forget that I leave this scene of so many happy moments to-morrow, at early dawn? Why have you delayed this momentous question until the last moment?"

“ Ah, Eliza, you forget, or perhaps do not know, that I leave America in three days, not to return for one year. So I put off all important questions intentionally. For, had you refused me, I would never have cared to set foot upon my native shore ; but, as it is, I will count the days that will bring me home to claim my bride. So, as that question is settled, we will rejoin our friends, for I am supremely happy. Ah, here is Ames ! ” And as they arose, they were confronted by that young gentleman, who had just returned from his stolen visit to Rosa.

As Eliza raised her hand, Ames recognized the ring that Ashton had shown him soon after the assault made upon him. He knew it was an old heirloom ; had been a betrothal ring in the family for generations. Ames looked from one to the other for an explanation, but neither gave it. Eliza drew on her glove, took the arm of her handsome, dark-eyed lover, and left the wondering Ames to seek a partner for the dance that was just forming.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE STEAMBOAT DISASTER.

HE moon shone brightly upon the waters of the grand old Mississippi, as the steamer *Granville* walked upon it, "like a thing of life." The band playing a national air, as the old star-spangled banner floated proudly to the breeze, who, to gaze upon that lovely scene, would think that death was near to many? Such is life, in the midst of which we are truly in death.

The *Granville* had not been out more than three hours before she was overtaken by a handsome steamer, called the *Warning*, a very singular and most inappropriate name, for she carried destruction and death with her without the least warning.

When the *Warning* came steaming up the river, everybody rushed upon deck, for well they knew she was bound for a race with some vessel.

"As he struck out for the shore with his burden, the noble vessel sank beneath the waves."

"THE GALLANT RESCUE."



THE GALLANT RESCUE.

Kelly



She came up handsomely, and the two steamers were alongside of each other. When the captain of the *Warning* shouted through his trumpet to the captain of the *Granville* to make ready for a race, the passengers remonstrated, but the captain put on steam, and in a twinkling the two steamers were skimming over the waters as if they were being chased by some evil spirit.

The betting ran high by the excited male passengers, while the women and children were called to go into the cabin. Some of the most timid were glad to take shelter these but some again were greatly excited, and remained upon deck. Among those who remained was our hero Ames Skiff, and near him stood the beautiful and courageous Rosa Lynn.

Ames urged upon Rosa to withdraw, but she said she was fascinated by danger and she would remain if he did so. They had not been more than twenty minutes eagerly watching the race, when a terrible crash was heard, and the *Granville* keeled over on her side. The confusion was fearful.

Women screaming and praying, and strong men cursing and praying alternately ; the deck hands lowering the boats, and the captain shouting through his trumpet. All this had a dreadful effect upon a young invalid lady who was seated upon a stool

by the side of an aged gentleman, with her face covered with her hands ; she was trembling like an aspen.

Ames had presence of mind enough to throw his arm around Rosa, who clung to him, crying wildly : " Save, oh ! save me, Ames ! I do not want to die. I cannot, will not die."

Ames hurriedly caught up the fragile girl with one hand, and Rosa with the other, when the poor girl frantically cried out : " Oh, sir ; let me go and save my father !" But the old gentleman seemed to regain his youth, and said : " Nettie ! Nettie ! come, I'll save you child !" and he was about to snatch his daughter from the strong arm of the young hero, when she clung to him with her little remaining strength, and Ames, seeing the danger of waiting another moment, rushed past the old gentleman, telling him to follow or he would be lost.

They just reached the lower deck in time to jump into the last boat, which was already filled. They had hardly left the steamer when she sank ; the captain and deck hands jumped into the water, and were rescued by a passing boat. And the *Granville* found a resting-place 'neath the waves of the Mississippi. In the meantime Ames reached the shore with his charges, and found comfortable quarters for them.



CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE CLUB.



WHEN the news of the disaster and the loss of the *Granville* reached the city of C., the consternation was very great, for a great many persons had relatives or friends on board.

At the club-room of the "American," one by one of its members took his seat in silence. In a short time the door was thrown open by Henry DeBar, who entered with a paper in his hand. All arose to their feet in a moment to hear the news whether good or bad.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I fear there is no hope, "for—listen"—and he read from an evening sheet: "The race between the *Granville* and *Warning* proved a most calamitous affair; owing to the mismanagement of the *Granville*, and the large number of passengers she bore, it was found that all must go down with her. Several attempts to save

the women and children were made, but proved ineffectual. The heroism of young Ames Skiff of C. was worthy of note. In trying to save two ladies he lost his own life. The last seen of him was, he was making a superhuman effort to reach the shore, and would have done so, had not the poor frightened women held on to him so tenaciously. He was seen to clasp them tightly to his noble breast and sink to rise no more."

As Henry finished reading he leaned his head upon the table and groaned aloud; every man there either did the same, or hid his face in his hands to shut out the terrible vision. Milton Smith cried out: "Oh, Ames! Ames! why did you leave us? He, the noble, lion-hearted Ames, has sacrificed his young life. He was always foremost in danger; he knew not the meaning of the word fear; he was generous to a fault; although he had the strength of a lion, his heart was gentle as a woman's; he did not sympathize with the afflicted with empty words, but always with his purse open. The poor he made glad always by his generous deeds, and the wealthy were ever ready to welcome him for his bright genial disposition. I pray heaven we will not have to mourn our noble friend, gentlemen; that this report may be, like many others, without the least foundation."

When Milton had ceased speaking the young men answered with reverence, "May God grant it."

It was some hours before the members of the American Club regained their composure, for from the first of Ames's coming among them he was a favorite.

Although a perfect stranger two years before, he had endeared himself to many by his noble daring and his genial companionship.

As we have seen already, this rumor was false, for, when Ames had gained the shore with several others, the noble vessel had sunk beneath the treacherous waves, and the *Warning*, which was damaged severely, turned off in her crippled state, with her deck crowded with excited men, gazing at the wreck their madness had made.

For some time after the landing the greatest consternation prevailed among the ladies, for not a steamer hove in sight, and darkness was creeping on.

The old gentleman, too, became very troublesome ; for he could not believe that his daughter was unhurt. It seemed too great a miracle for the frail girl to stand the shock.



CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW THE SUFFERERS WERE RESCUED.

HEN night spread her dark mantle o'er the earth, and spangled it with glittering stars, which seemed to wink and blink in their watch over the poor unfortunates, Ames, with two others, went in search of something to make a fire. Soon they returned with their arms full of brush, and lighted a fire, which they kept up all night. Towards morning, the *Trenton*, one of the grand floating palaces of the Mississippi, hove in sight, and the sentinel on duty gave a signal, which was returned promptly.

In a moment all was confusion. The men had to go some distance for the ladies, who were sheltered in an old barn, but had already heard the welcome shout as the watchers beheld the vessel rounding in, and many a heartfelt "thank God!" issued from those trembling lips.

Soon the steamer landed ; the men, who were ever ready to help the unfortunate, threw out the plank with alacrity, and those on shore met them half way with their precious freight.

When they were about to draw in the plank, the captain, who was standing near, turned quickly, and found himself face to face with our hero. He started perceptibly, and cried out : “ Do my eyes deceive me, or is this Ames Skiff ? ” and the jolly tar grasped the hand that Ames extended to him, saying : “ Ye gods ! my boy, where did you drop from ? how came you in this lonely region ? for, of all places along the banks of this glorious river, this is the most forlorn. I had no idea, my boy, when I ran into port, of seeing anything but a party of vagabond negroes, who often hail us on our passage down, or lure us on with their beacon fires. Well, Ames, my boy, I am confoundedly glad to see you ; it does my eyes good, I tell you, boy. But, I declare, how handsome you have grown ! Why, boy, I can scarcely believe you to be the little towheaded rascal I used to know,” and the good-hearted captain rattled on for some time in the same strain.

Ames told him exactly how it happened, and jolly captain made an awful long face when he heard of the loss of the stately *Granville*,

and exclaimed: "Well, if there is not something done to stop this reckless racing, we will all find ourselves some of these fine days taking a dive below, to listen to

‘What are the wild waves saying.’

Now, as we have so strangely met, after a separation of so many years, we may, in all probability, meet often, so I will leave you at Vicksburg as you desire, and will keep a keen lookout for you, for I have strong ideas that you may turn up, one of these fine days, in the White House at Washington. Indeed, I hope so, boy; for if honesty and energy are to have its reward, I know before these old eyes are closed, I will have the pleasure of grasping the hand of Ames Skiff, President of the United States."

Ames smiled and bowed his head. Just then preparations were being made to land, and he merely had time to thank the captain and look after his friends, when the plank was thrown out and was soon crowded with visitors for Vicksburg.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE AVOWAL AND SEPARATION.

URELY Ames, you will not desert me for that fragile girl? I, who have known and loved you ever since you were a boy. She loves you for your position and fine appearance only, and because you saved her life." And as she spoke those words, the fair speaker clasped her tiny hands upon the folded arms of Ames, and looked wistfully up into his thoughtful face, awaiting his answer.

Some few moments elapsed before he uttered one word. Then he said kindly, but firmly: "Rosa, what right have you to dictate to me what or who I shall love! Is it not enough for you to know that I love you only as a sister? I have often told you that nothing but death shall ever sever that bond."

"But, Ames, I am not content with such love.

I want you to love me with that burning intensity of feeling with which I love you."

"Nay, Rosa, do not proceed, I beg of you," said Ames, sternly, as he unfolded his arms, and shook off her hands. "I will not encourage your thinking of such a thing, it will only wound your self-love, and place me in an embarrassing position. I have never made rash promises. I have always told you that you shall have my entire protection and support so long as you need it; will not that suffice, tell me, little one?" and Ames softened his mood, and leaned gently over the drooping form, parted the raven curls from her pure white brow, and imprinted a kiss of friendship upon it.

Poor Rosa threw her arms around his neck, and cried frantically, "Ames! Ames! why cannot you return my love? I love you to idolatry! You are my life, my world! I fain would die here at your feet," and the infatuated girl threw herself upon her knees, and clung to him in utter despair.

He lifted her gently, and seating himself by her side upon a sofa, said, in a low, soft voice: "Rosa, you ask that which is not mine to give. You are brilliant and handsome; I admire you, and would defend you with my life, if need be, as quick as I would one of my own family, but my heart is not mine to give; it was given long ago to a sweet

maiden far, far from here." As he uttered these words, Rosa sprang to her feet, and confronted him ; her large eyes flashing fire, her cheeks as red as flame, she cried :

"It is enough—beware!" and before Ames could detain her, she reached the door, and was gone.

Ames paced the floor of the elegant room some time after, musing upon the sudden turn of affairs, when he suddenly faced himself in the mirror, saying, "Well, Mr. Skiff, I really think you had better pay your bill, and make yourself scarce." He brushed his hair from his brow, and continued : "I wonder why she loves me ; it certainly is not for my good looks. But I must not leave her so, she might do some harm to herself." So saying, he left the room, and ascending two flights of stairs, came to the room occupied by Rosa, who, to his great surprise, was hastily packing her trunks. As he approached, she hardly deigned to notice him. But he was not to be put off in this way. He placed his hand upon her shoulder as she was kneeling before a trunk, and said : "Rosa, why this sudden change ? Have you made up your mind to go back to C. with me, or will you continue your journey to Grand Gulf ? I am at your service either way."

She arose and answered, haughtily : “ Mr. Skiff, I will continue my journey alone—or, rather, I can dispense with your gallant services.”

“ Now, Rosa, that, of course, is optional with yourself ; but remember, my dear girl, whenever you stand in need of a friend, hesitate not one moment to call upon me, for I still adhere to my promise given to the little orphan circus-rider years ago.”

“ ’Tis well you remember so well, Mr. Skiff,” said she, as she mockingly bowed before him. “ I think our interview is at an end, sir,” and she advanced towards the door, opened it, and stood with the handle in her hand, as if to invite the intruder out.

Ames saw that he had aroused all the evil in her nature, and with a smile as mocking as her own, approached the door, extended his hand, which she coolly took, and bade him farewell, while he, in turn, coolly walked out of the room, with the words : “ Good-bye, little Rosa ; God bless you wherever you go.”

When she closed the door, she took good care to lock it. Then she threw up her hands, exclaiming : “ O God ! I have driven away the only true friend I have upon earth ; what shall I do ! What shall I do ! ” and the poor unfortunate girl crouched on the floor in agony of spirit.

So we must leave her and follow Ames, who immediately went to the office of the hotel, paid his bill, and ordered his luggage to be sent on board the steamer bound for C. He then paid Rosa's bill, and left a note for her in care of the gentlemanly clerk, and turned his back upon Vicksburg.





CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SUDDEN RETURN.—THE GLAD SURPRISE.



ONCE more we find our hero pacing the deck of the *Sibyl*, another of the grand floating palaces of the Father of Waters ; but this time he is alone ; the bright moon lights up the lovely and grand views, as the noble vessel skims over the water. No accident mars the pleasantness of the homeward trip. Merry sounds of revelry ascend from below, soft music floats upon the midnight air, from a little select party at the end of the upper deck, and all seems happy and gay, as the bells strike twelve. There is no thought of sleep upon that boat, except by a few elderly people, who had long since retired into their state-rooms, and were soon lulled to sleep by the motion of the *Sibyl* as she skims over the blue waters.

As Ames leaned over the railings, leisurely smoking his cigar and watching the curling smoke as he

blew it off, yet listening to the soft music, as it was wafted in gentle murmurs to his ear, his thoughts would stray back to the lonely, but imperious woman he had left behind in a strange city, and he spoke aloud: "I wonder why she spurned my offer of protection? Was it indeed jealousy? Did she object to my little simple acts of courtesy to the unfortunate invalid who was thrust so unceremoniously upon my care and notice? Bah! I must say to those thoughts! Avaunt—intrude not upon my privacy, let her go her own way, and I'll henceforth rid myself of all responsibility; she has spurned my services, let it remain as it is," and he yawned and went below.

Nothing of note transpired until the vessel reached port, at early dawn, when everything was in confusion. Our hero soon had his luggage put upon a carriage, and seating himself told the driver to drive to the Ashton House. Upon arriving at which, he was surprised to find a group of young men standing upon the piazza, engaged in earnest conversation at so early an hour. As he alighted from the carriage, he was recognized by one of the group, who sprang forward with "My God! there is Ames Skiff, alive!" and forthwith grasped our hero by the hand, and carried him into the house in triumph, the others following; all of

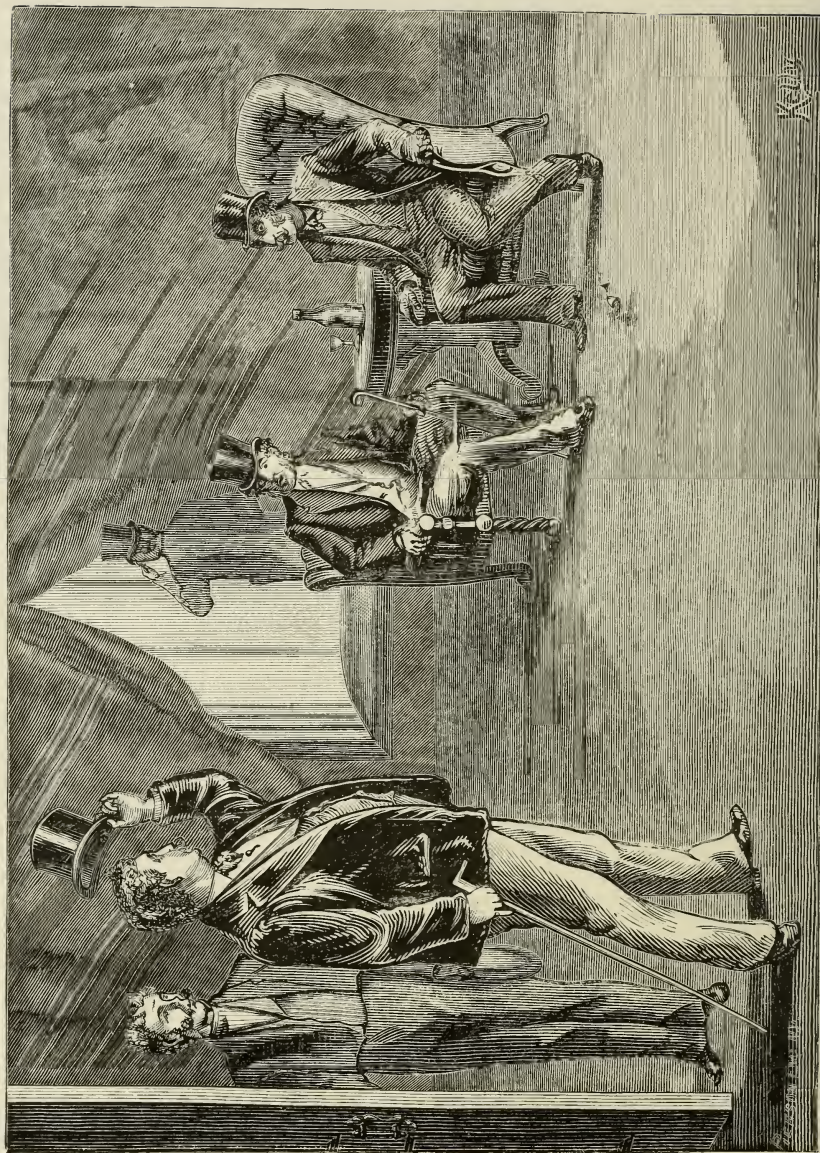
them were surprised and overjoyed at seeing him again, for as they said ; " They never did expect to have him among them in the flesh again," so they pinched him to see if, indeed, he was a ghost or mortal.

They soon found that he was mortal by seeing him devour the savory breakfast that was set before him.

After breakfast they annoyed him greatly with questions, which he waived, telling them that if they would promise to keep his coming among them secret, and meet him at the club-room at nine o'clock in the evening, he would relate his adventures, and also his miraculous escape. They promised secrecy, and separated for their different labors.

That same evening, while they were discussing the events of the day, the door was thrown open, and, to the surprise of all, except the four friends who had seen him in the morning, Ames Skiff advanced into the centre of the room.

Henry DeBar and Milton Smith alone kept their seats. Their senses seemed paralyzed. They were utterly unable to articulate one sentence. Every man else started to his feet at once, thinking it was a vision. Some stood with one hand shading their eyes, and with the other grasped the back of their chair. The silence was painful, until Ames,



“AT THE CLUB.”
“Have you no word of welcome?”

in a choked voice, cried out : “ My friends, it is I, have you no word of welcome for me ? ”

Immediately the spell was broken, and several stepped forward and grasped his hand, saying : “ We indeed thought it was your spirit ; for we had mourned you as dead. Thank God we once more see you in the flesh ! We bid you a hearty welcome.”

“ Thanks, many thanks, my kind friends.” Then turning to those two friends who sat in their chairs like petrified men, he said, holding out his hand : “ Have you no word of welcome for me ? ”

The sorrowful tone in which this question was asked seemed to arouse them to their senses, and they grasped his extended hand, and exclaimed : “ Ames, Ames, we extend a hearty welcome ! ”

After this, order seemed to have been restored among them, and our hero stood before them, at their request, and related his misfortunes and escape.

At a late hour the club separated, with many thanks for the safe arrival of the favorite.

Just before the breaking up of the meeting, they all arose, and surrounding Ames, drank to his safety and future happiness, each in his turn bidding him a kind good-night.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ALARM.—THE RESCUE AND ITS RESULTS.



THE next morning the papers were teeming with the news of the miraculous escape and safe arrival of our hero.

While he was at his breakfast at the hotel, all eyes were fixed upon him, for everybody had read of his arrival, and were prepared with keen glances of curiosity, which he bore with modesty and manliness.

Many that were strangers before sought and received an introduction, and congratulated him upon his heroism in the hour of danger. One old gentleman said, as he shook him cordially by the hand : “ Well, sir, I have heard of you in my far-off home, and now have the unexpected pleasure of taking you by the hand ; but I hope the next time I have this pleasure it will be in the White House at Washington, for, if virtue and bravery

will ever have its reward, the people will not be satisfied until they raise you to the highest position it is in their power to give."

Ames blushed, and laughingly said, that was the destiny he had marked out for himself, when he ran away from the circus, but since he had become a man, he knew what such castles in the air were worth.

Although, by his industry and perseverance, he had accomplished so much, he mistrusted his abilities to gain so high an eminence ; that he felt highly flattered by the encomiums bestowed upon him, and again thanking the old gentleman, he made his escape from the throng of idlers. Scarcely had he reached the front door of the hotel, when the cry of "mad-dog" reached his ear, and looking in the direction from whence came the dreadful sound, he saw a large Newfoundland dog, belonging to a friend of his, running at full speed up the street, snapping at everything it came in contact with.

Just then two young ladies with a little boy came around the corner, and the dog, foaming and snapping, made straight for them. At this terrible moment, three young men reached the spot, and the foremost one ran near the side of the animal and fired. Seeing it did not take effect, he brought down his piece with full force upon its head, which

had the effect of bringing down the monster, while the two companions fired upon him, and the once noble but unfortunate brute lay dead at their feet.

While this terrible scene was being enacted, hundreds of persons that witnessed it, put their hands over their ears to shut out the sounds of the heartrending screams of the poor affrighted women, who were so miraculously saved from a most horrible death.

Neither of them fainted, but were conscious of their danger, and thankful for their timely delivery from certain death. And when they tremblingly turned to thank their noble deliverers, one of them cried out : " Oh ! oh ! it is Ames Skiff ! " and not until then, did senses forsake her, when she would have fallen, had not the noble Ames caught her in his arms, and, amid vociferous cheers from the excited crowd, bore her (followed by the other lady and boy) into the ladies' parlor of the hotel. He laid her gently upon a sofa, and called for restoratives, then left her in the care of the ladies, who vied with each other in doing good for the poor frightened woman.

When Ames returned to the main entrance of the hotel, he was received with shouts and waving of handkerchiefs, which he acknowledged with a modest bow, and made way for his two brave com-

panions, who were being congratulated on every side. Those two brave men were none other than our old friends, Henry DeBar and Milton Smith.

After giving directions to a poor laborer to remove the carcass of the poor brute, that it should not meet the eyes of the ladies as they came out, and rewarding him for his trouble, Ames turned his back upon the excited multitude, and re-entered the parlor, when all made way for him, as he advanced towards the sofa, upon which sat the young lady whom he had rescued.

She arose and gave him her hand, and with the greatest agitation, said: "Thank you, Mr. Skiff, for saving my life, and the lives of those I love!"

With scarcely less emotion than she manifested, he took the extended hand, and bowed over it with reverence, then said, in a low, but manly voice: "I am only too proud to be the humble deliverer of one I prize above all on earth. Annie! I am glad to see that your humble friend is not forgotten."

As the ladies, who had been most kind in their endeavors to resuscitate the gentle girl, found their presence was no longer required, they modestly withdrew, offering their services, if further needed.

Ames still held the hand of the gentle girl, who

blushed deeply. When he said he was glad he was not forgotten, the reply was given in a low, musical voice :

“Mr. Skiff, I have never forgotten the great service which you rendered my unhappy uncle. If you were to see him now in his happy home, surrounded by his lovely children ! The oldest boy I have now with me, and it was he whom you rescued. Oh, have not I enough to hold you in grateful remembrance ? Now, do I not owe you my own life ?”

At this declaration our hero seemed emboldened, and as he was seated beside her upon the sofa, he leaned over, and taking the little white hand within his own, said, as he gently pressed it :

“May I claim that life as my reward, sweet Annie ? I have waited years for this hour, and bless this accident, as it has not resulted fatally. Am I too bold in asking that all-important question ?” and his head bent lower, as he earnestly asked : “Annie, will you be my wife ? Encourage me, and I am yours for life. Repulse me, and I will not intrude upon you ever again. I am an honorable man, and ask the simple, but all-important question, which only awaits your answer, yes, or no. Which will it be, Annie ?”

Annie whispered, while her face was suffused with blushes, “Yes !”

“Bless you, dearest. But tell me, is this a debt of gratitude, or love? I will be proud of my treasure if it is gratitude that prompts the bestowal of your hand, but will not rest content or be happy without your love,” and his arm somehow stole around her waist, and she leaned her blushing face upon his broad shoulder, as she faintly answered, “Ames, I have loved you long years ago!” At which candid avowal Ames pressed her to his noble heart, and imprinted his first kiss of love upon her rosy lips, crying, excitedly, “Mine, mine at last!”

So we must leave them in their revelry of love’s young dream.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DOUBLE SURPRISE.

 S Ames was sitting alone in his office one stormy day, long after his betrothal, the door was thrown open, and his friend Henry DeBar advanced to where he was sitting, without the least ceremony, and said, in an excited manner :

“ Ames, are you aware that Clarence McMurdy has returned, and is now at the Ashton House? There are crowds waiting upon him. They say that he has returned from the mines immensely wealthy. Don't you think that we ought to wait upon him immediately, with the earnest desire that he should leave the place in less than twenty-four hours, for you know that he has committed an outrage upon society ; therefore should be removed without delay.”

Our hero heard his friend through without the least interruption, then, taking his cigar from his

mouth and slowly shaking off the ashes, said coolly, much to the astonishment of his irate friend :

“ Well, the fact is, Henry, I feel a little too happy to meddle with other people's business. Now, look here, old fellow ! This offense was committed a long while ago, and as it did not prove fatal, why should we pursue him further ? Perhaps he still suffers from the sharp sting of remorse. Who knows ? But, as we expect to be forgiven some day or other the offenses done in the body, why, my boy, we must forgive our fellow man. Take all things into consideration : this is a free country, and he has a right to return ; and we were furiously angry at the time we exiled the poor wretch ;, for, as you say, an outrage had been committed against society, and we set ourselves up as righteous vindicators of said society. Now, after years, by some streak of luck, he returns with a large fortune ; let us welcome him as a penitent, if he shows any contrition for what he has done. Now, listen, old fellow. I am the most fortunate man about. I have secured the prize that I have longed for many years. Why, Henry, did you think that while we were chasing the rabid dog, I was meeting my fate ? I say, old boy,

‘ There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.’

“ So here goes ! I am soon to be married, and want you to act as groomsman.”

“ Give us your hand, old boy,” and Henry grasped the hand of his friend eagerly, saying, at the same time, that he asked too much, for he was to be married himself on the next evening, but as it was going to be a very quiet affair, he did not intend to let any one know until they were apprised of the all-important fact through the medium of the press.

It was now Ames’ turn to be surprised, and congratulate his friend, saying : “ Ah ! you have a young family to go straight to house-keeping with, while I will have to wait long years for such happiness.”

“ Yes, thank Heaven !” said Henry, “ they have been under the best tuition for three years, and I am not ashamed to bring them forward into society. Little Maggie will be a shining light, I’ll assure you ; she has a magnificent voice, and has a quick ear for music ; she already plays well ; that new uncle of hers never seems tired of gazing into her sweet face, but moans continually about her being just like her mother was when she was her age. I think he must have been in love with her, and being disappointed, left the country until his grief was assuaged.

“Why don’t you give him the entire control and expense, too, of the children, if he likes?” said Ames.

“Now, look here, Ames, I would not part from my treasures for him or any other man. He has often requested me to yield my right, because of his prior claim upon the mother I presume, but nothing shall ever cause me to give away my little brood that God directed me to that stormy day. No, sir! My heart is bound up in those children. I am father, mother, uncle and everything to them, until at the altar I give them a new mother in the gentle, pure woman whom they call auntie. She has been indefatigable in her endeavors to cultivate their young minds, and so far has been most successful. Oh, I tell you, my friend, I have much to be thankful for.”

In a few days after the above conversation, there was a quiet wedding at the neat residence of Mrs. Sutton, only a few select friends were invited.

The bride was dressed in pure white, her hair worn plain as usual, with a wreath of orange blossoms, and a long veil nearly reaching to her feet.

Very lovely did she look without ornaments of any kind. Her face was suffused with blushes, as she tremblingly answered “yes,” to the minister’s

question, "Wilt thou have this man to be thine husband?"

Little Maggie was also dressed in white, for she acted as bridesmaid, and Ernest, her brother, acted as groomsman—lovely and blooming did they look.

When the ceremony was over Ames approached the bride to congratulate her, but was surprised to see Maggie stand in front of her as though to defend her from some attack. Henry was much amused when she said: "This is my auntie; you must not crush her pretty dress."

Ames stooped and whispered something to the little girl, when she left the room, and everything went on as usual until the folding-doors were thrown open and Maggie stood upon the threshold and beckoned to the bridal party to advance; when, to their utter surprise, they found a table set. In the centre was a splendid pyramid cake, and several ornamented boxes strewn over the table. These were presents from friends who left it entirely under the management of Ames, who, to gain the favor of the child gave it over to her. She, like a little woman, arranged them upon the table, placing also the bridal-cake on each side of the pyramid. When the party approached the table Maggie gave the knife to the bride, who in-

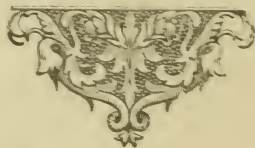
stantly cut the silver cake, then handed the knife to the groom, when he did likewise with the fruit-cake—which is always the groom's cake.

After the cake-cutting Maggie presented each box with a card attached, with the compliments of the giver. The first box opened happened to be from Ames—it consisted of an entire set of pearls. The next was from the groom—a magnificent set of diamonds ; the next was a splendid gold watch and chain from her uncle ; the next was a fine large Turkey-Morocco Bible (with a mother's blessing inscribed on the cover). Each box in turn was opened, and displayed jewelry of every conceivable design, until, at last, Maggie lifted the cloth and asked her good uncle, " Please to take the large box from under the table." He did so ; and soon they knocked off one side ; when, to the astonishment of all except Henry, they beheld the three children painted as large as life upon canvas before them, and, upon the heavy frame, in large gold letters, were the words : " MY JEWELS."

Every eye was upon Henry, who seemed very proud, as he tore off the balance of the box, and with the help of Ames placed it before the bride, who placed her hand in his and said, with deep emotion :

“ Words are inadequate to express my gratitude, my husband!” and every one flocked around to see the beautiful painting.

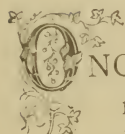
A little while after every one was surprised to see Maggie give the bride two little boxes ; the first contained a set of jewelry made entirely of hair cut from her own head ; the second contained a beautifully bound velvet Prayer-book from her brother. These simple tokens of love and gratitude caused the tears to well up into her eyes as she kissed them tenderly. So ended the quiet wedding.





CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SAD HISTORY OF FRANK HARDY'S EARLY LIFE.



ONCE upon a time, as a fairy tale commences, there lived in the great city of New York a wealthy gentleman. His family consisted of a son and two daughters, with a lovely gentle wife. For years everything went on smoothly; not a cloud had arisen in their bright horizon; everything was prosperous and lovely.

One day in December, when the earth had arrayed herself as a bride, Millie Hardy was decked in her bridal robes and stood before the man of God to be united in the bonds of holy wedlock to Captain Malcolm Sutton, of the United States Army, as gallant an officer as ever drew his sword in defense of his country. The handsome couple received the congratulations of their friends, and departed immediately for his post of duty.

Again all was well with the family until the next October, when there came the terrible news that Mr. Hardy had become bankrupt. His creditors were, of course, clamorous for their dues, and the honest and high-minded couple left their palatial residence, taking only a few household effects and little souvenirs, went to housekeeping on a small scale in a neat little brick house on a quiet street. Everything was soon sold, and the creditors satisfied, but the old gentleman's health began to fade. He had never in his life known what poverty was. Being of a wealthy and aristocratic family, he could not endure the humiliation, and soon faded ; so, when spring spread her green mantle over the earth, he was followed to the grave by a few faithful friends, who erected a marble monument to his memory, and gave him a long obituary ; when that was done, they seemed to forget that he had left a helpless family, who stood upon the brink of poverty, and needed only a kind hand to lead them again to the threshold of prosperity.

Some time after Mr. Hardy was consigned to the grave, Etta, the youngest girl, sought and obtained a situation as governess in a wealthy family, who became very much attached to her. Time wore on, and one day there came from India Mrs. Lacy's elegant brother, Walter Moore.

When Etta was first introduced to him, she thought that she had seen that face before, for no one could ever look into that handsome face, and see that rare beautiful smile, and ever forget it.

Often would Walter accompany her in her rambles with the children, and take delight in doing so. When all was still except the faint sounds of music from the parlor, he would always find his way in there; and when she would see him enter, she would leave.

One evening she was seated thus, when she leaned her head upon the piano, and sighed heavily, a hand was laid gently upon the bowed head, and a kindly voice said: "Etta!" She raised her head, and would have escaped, but he gently detained her, seated her upon a sofa, and asked her if she would listen to one word from him, if she thought he was worth wasting her time upon.

She tremblingly and blushingly took the proffered seat, saying she would be pleased to give all attention to what he had to say.

"Etta," he began, "have you entirely forgotten Walter Ashton?"

She started in astonishment to her feet, and exclaimed, "Walter Ashton! What of him?" And she sunk again in her seat, and covered her face with her hands.

In a moment, Walter was on his knees before her, crying wildly, "Etta, Etta, darling, behold me at your feet, I am Walter Ashton. I love you still. Say you forgive me, and I will make you my wife before the world. I deceived you only in name. It was only a joke of one of my friends. Forgive, oh! forgive me, or I will go away, and never will look upon your sweet face again.

The gentle girl forgave her first and only lover; and, to the surprise of Mrs. Lacy, soon became Mrs. Walter Ashton Moore.

The happy couple went only to bid Mrs. Hardy adieu and receive her blessing, and left the country.

In the meantime, Frank obtained a lucrative position in a store, where he soon won the esteem of all connected with him.

Years rolled on. Then came the tidings of the death of Walter Ashton Moore and his beautiful wife, by yellow fever, in New Orleans. They left one child, a handsome boy, whom his guardian placed in college.

One day there was a considerable amount of notes missing from the drawer of the store where young Hardy was employed, and his employer strongly suspected him of embezzlement, when he thought he would detect him in the theft by putting a secret mark upon the notes, which thing

he did, and found they disappeared as fast as the others did.

One day, he called Frank to him, and told him that he was suspected of theft, and therefore he felt it was his duty to discharge him; that he could not, for his mother's sake, have him arrested, though by right he should do so.

The young man declared again and again his innocence, but the old gentleman was inexorable, and young Hardy left his presence with almost a broken heart.

He tried to gain employment, but failed in consequence of not having a recommendation from his last employer. He did not know what to do, or how was he going to leave his mother, who believed him innocent. Time wore on, and his mother sold one thing after the other to pay the rent, and for what they ate, but nothing could assuage the grief of Frank. The thought of committing suicide often pressed itself upon him, but his mother kept him from it.

One day, while looking into the window of a jeweler, he was tempted to smash the window and steal what he could, so he would be put in prison to escape the miserable life he was living; when, to his surprise, he heard familiar voices behind him saying :

"If we could only find poor Hardy, we would make all reparation in our power."

A dizziness came over him, and he fell to the earth. The two men saw him fall and rushed to him, picked him up, when the younger one said :

"My heavens! It is Frank Hardy!" and they carried him to a drug store, where he was kindly attended to and soon recovered, when he begged piteously to let him go home. The young man extended his hand kindly, and said :

"Frank! don't you remember me?"

Frank shook his head and whispered :

"Indeed, I think I ought."

"Now, Frank, listen," said the young man. "I am your friend. I have been searching for you for some time to make all the reparation in our power. Long after you left my father's store he made some alteration in it, and, in pulling down an old closet, the workmen came upon a rat's nest, and, to the surprise of all, the marked notes were found! when it was supposed the mother rat had stolen them to make a bed for her young ones.

"Now, come ; my father is waiting for you to come and be reinstated, both in your place in the store and in his heart, for he hates to think you ungrateful to him."

Frank said he could not present himself in such

a miserable condition, but would do so in a few days.

“Oh, never mind the clothes,” said his friend, and he called a carriage, and insisted upon Frank accompanying him home, where he was received graciously as a lost one of the family.

The wheel of fortune turned in his favor once more. Frank had his salary given him for the time he was dismissed; and, more than that, the widow had the deed of a small handsome house and furniture presented to her by Frank's employer for the suffering he had caused her. When all this happened Frank was not more than twenty years of age. Time passed; his mother was laid beside his father in Greenwood, and having no tie he sold his house and went abroad, where he amassed a large fortune, and we find him in the City of C——.





CHAPTER XXX.

THE SINGULAR MEETING OF UNCLE AND NEPHEW.



ON a fine day, while a party of friends were at the picture gallery of Mertenich, our hero, Ames Skiff, called the attention of Mr. Hardy to a splendid landscape by Moore. Hardy scrutinized the painting carefully, then turning to Ames, said, musingly : “ Moore, Moore ; where is he from, do you know ? ”

“ Oh, I believe he was born in Paris. He is not a poor artist, as you imagine, but a gentleman of leisure. His mother and father died when he was very young, with yellow fever, while on a visit to New Orleans.”

“ Stay ! ” and Hardy clutched the shoulder of the astonished Ames, while his very hair seemed to stand on end, and his eyes dilate half their natural size.

“ My dear fellow, what is the matter with you ? ”

are you ill?" and Ames led him to a seat where he asked him to explain his singular conduct.

"Now, listen," said Hardy. "I had a sister who died with yellow fever. She left a boy; his name was Ashton Moore—is it he?"

It was now Ames' place to be astonished; he gave a perceptible start; then, recovering himself, grasped the hand of Hardy, saying:

"Hardy, I think it is he; would you know him by his picture? If so, come to my home, and I will show you one he had taken before he left for Europe."

The poor man accepted eagerly, and, according to promise, the next morning found him in Ames' room anxiously examining the miniature of Ashton Moore, whom he immediately recognized as his kinsman by the blended likeness of both father and mother.

Ames was much affected as he gazed upon the grief-stricken man with his head bowed in silence, looking wistfully at the handsome picture before him, while he groaned aloud, saying:

"My sister! my poor sister!"

"Now, Hardy, don't take on so; you will soon have the pleasure of beholding your nephew in the flesh, for his time is up and he will soon be here, although I have not heard from him for three

weeks. His last letter was to the effect that he would not write again, but would come unbidden. Now, shake hands, Hardy!" and Ames whispered, "you will be nearer than you expect to me, for I welcome Ashton as a brother—he will soon marry my sister."

Hardy grasped the hand of Ames and said :

"Bless you! Have you been kind to the orphan?"

At this moment they were interrupted by the door being thrown open, and Milton Smith rushed in saying :

"What will you give for good news, old boy?" and, just then, another form rushed past him and Ashton Moore extended his hand to his friend, who was greatly surprised but none the less delighted at the interruption. After the greeting was over, Ames said to his friend :

"I have more news for you than you have for me," and he led Ashton before Mr. Hardy, saying :

"Now, Hardy, this is he of whom I spoke ; this is my friend and brother, Ashton Moore."

By this time Hardy was deaf to what he said ; his head fell forward, and in a moment more he had measured his length upon the floor. The young men dashed water in his face, and unfast-

ened his cravat, and soon he showed signs of returning life. The first words were :

“My sister! my sister!”

Ashton knelt beside him chafing his hands, when he opened his eyes and fixed them intently upon him, saying : “It is he! I’m sure it is he!”

Ashton said, in a soft voice : “Yes, uncle, it is I,” and the two young men raised him upon his feet; catching the air from the open window, he soon revived, and folding Ashton in his arms as though he were a boy, wept bitterly.

Nothing but his sobs broke the silence for some time. At length Ashton said, as he released himself from the fond embrace :

“Uncle Frank, I have often heard my mother speak of you and Aunt Millie. Tell me, is she living yet? Oh, I am so glad that the orphan boy does not stand alone in the world, as he expected. I was anticipating great comfort in having a brother in this noble-hearted man, but now my cup of happiness is full. O God! I thank thee,” and the poor fellow, who had held out so bravely, lost all control of himself, and wept with his face buried in his hands, while he cried aloud “O my sainted mother! has thy spirit always kept guard over me?”

The three friends looked on in silence. When this paroxysm was over, they all separated.



CHAPTER XXXI.

ASHTON MOORE MEETS WITH NOTHING BUT SURPRISES.

THE day following, Frank Hardy called upon Ashton at his hotel, and after an hour's conversation, he drew from him all he knew concerning his parents, and seemed overjoyed at finding his nephew so handsome and intelligent. He arose and invited Ashton to ride with him to see a very dear friend of his mother's, which Ashton readily accepted ; and on entering the carriage, gave orders to drive to Woodbine Cottage.

About half an hour afterwards, the carriage stopped before an elegant cottage, and a little girl met them at the gate. It was Maggie, who was just returning from school, with her books in her arms and her hat hanging down on her neck—the cord alone kept it from falling off.

When she saw Mr. Hardy, she ran towards him, crying : “ Oh, uncle, uncle ! I've got something to tell you. My mother has got a new little sister for

me. Papa went out to look for you. Do come and see my little sister! I was just going to see if grandma is at home yet. She was at my house when I went to school."

By the time Maggie had delivered this harangue Ashton jumped out of the carriage; when she looked astonished at seeing a stranger, and waited for an introduction, which Uncle Hardy soon gave.

When she heard her uncle call him Ashton, she said: "Why, he must be something to me! Now, I wonder who he is."

She put down her books, and took each gentleman by the hand, and led them into the beautiful little parlor. Then left them.

They had not been there many minutes before she returned, leading by the hand Mrs. Sutton, who advanced towards her brother, who said: "Millie, don't you remember Etta had a son, Ashton?"

Ashton started to his feet, and exclaiming, "Aunt Millie!" while the poor woman screamed, "Ashton!" "Etta!" and fell fainting in his arms.

Poor Ashton held her in his arms. He seemed unwilling to yield her even by the earnest solicitude of Maggie—"that it was essential to place her back upon the sofa to bring her too."

Ashton cried again and again: "My mother,

my mother!" For, as he said afterwards, "I, who felt a mother's loving arms around me when a boy, felt that she was near me then."

It was a long while before Mrs. Sutton could be resuscitated. Maggie was busy as a bee, while poor Frank Hardy walked the floor, and wrung his hands, crying: "Oh, I have been too precipitate! My sister! Millie, Millie! speak to me. And the poor distracted man knelt over her, at one moment calling her endearing names, then the next would wring his hands and walk the floor.

At length, when Mrs. Sutton showed signs of returning life, he seemed delighted, and was as bright as a boy. He took the poor woman in his strong arms, and kissed her white brow, and, in a cheerful voice, said: "Sister, let me congratulate you upon being a grandmother!"

Mrs. Sutton smiled, and asked him who made him so wise, when he pointed to Maggie, saying: "My little Maggie!"

Maggie seemed to be very much pleased with Ashton, and asked him if he knew her papa, who used to be her Uncle Henry, but now he had married her Auntie Amy, he said that she must always call him papa, and Auntie Amy, mamma.

There seemed to be nothing but surprises for Ashton; for, while he was making inquiries about

this wonderful Uncle Henry, DeBar entered, and stood as one petrified, when he gazed upon the actors in that little scene. It was in that little parlor where he wooed and won his gentle wife. It was in that parlor he had brought his young orphans, and now, it was in that very room that he met his earliest and dearest friend.

Maggie aroused him by clinging to him, calling aloud, "Papa, papa, what is the matter?" When his senses returned, he grasped the hand of Ashton. For, in a little while, everything was explained, and after a few minutes' conversation, he invited him to call with his uncle, and then took Maggie and left the house.

Mrs. Sutton was delighted at finding her sister's child, and Ashton was only too glad to find an aunt or relative in this world.





CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

HE news spread like wildfire that Ashton Moore had returned, and had found relatives; he was besieged by his friends for several days.

When one day, to his delight, Ames brought him a letter in answer to his earnest request that Eliza should be married at the same time her brother was he snatched the letter eagerly from the hand of his intended brother-in-law, broke the seal, and cried out: "Yes, yes, she is coming; we must meet her day after to-morrow. Oh, Ames, I am too happy," and he clapped Ames upon the shoulder, his face beaming with the happiness which he felt.

At the time appointed, the lover and brother were at the pier, waiting for the steamer to round; they scanned every face upon deck, but the loved one was not there. No sooner had the vessel

reached the pier, than they sprang eagerly forward and made their way to the ladies' cabin, where they found the loved one waiting patiently for them.

Without the least hesitancy, Eliza threw herself into her noble brother's arms, much to the chagrin of her lover, who stood by awaiting an attack from that quarter himself.

When the greeting between brother and sister was over, Eliza placed her tiny hand in the outstretched one of her patient lover, saying, "Let me congratulate you upon your safe arrival and good looks, Mr. Moore. Oh, I am so happy to see you ; I never in my whole life spent such a long year."

"Ah ! indeed ; I am glad to hear it, Miss Eliza," said Ashton, and he bent gallantly over the little hand as he pressed it, and looked straight into her soft blue eyes. "Then, I have been missed by you. Ah ! do not blush so deeply, I am only too proud to think that I have been missed, and wish all those prying eyes around us were turned upon something else just now, and I would pluck the rosebud that so temptingly is placed before me ; but come, Eliza, let us hasten away," and he drew her arm within his own, and led her to the carriage, the door of which Ames held open for them. They

were driven to Ames's hotel, where everything was prepared for their reception, for Ames never did anything by halves. After supper, Ames disclosed his plans to Eliza."

Annie Penn wished to be married at the little stone chapel where all of her family were married, and Ames had proposed to Ashton to proceed forthwith to the village of M——.

Eliza was delighted at the plan, for, said she: "I would like to have everything conducted quietly."

"But," said Ashton, "although we will be married in a retired spot, and in a quiet manner, we will none the less enjoy our grand reception at home."

The next day, the party set out for M——, which they reached in safety.

When the boat stopped at the little old-fashioned wharf, there stood Mr. Penn and his brother Will, who eagerly grasped the hand of our hero, and led the little party to the great old-fashioned family carriage: they soon reached the house, to the delight of all.

Ames immediately sprang from the carriage at the sight of a sweet face at the window, which said face suddenly disappeared, and as the gentle Annie came bounding down the broad stairs, she was caught in the arms of her lover, who smothered

her with kisses. And so the party found them when they reached the porch.

At this moment the dining-room door was thrown open, and Mrs. Penn came out to meet them, with a crowd of little ones peeping behind her voluminous skirts, and shouting at the same time : " Papa ! papa ! "

Will took each in its turn and kissed it, then said to the astonished party : " You need not laugh, your time will come next," and he looked wondrously happy.

After order was restored, Annie led the beautiful Eliza to her chamber, where they remained a long time in earnest conversation, until the tea-bell rang. Then a vision of loveliness met the gaze of the anxious lovers, as they swept majestically into the room where they were waiting to take them into tea.

When Eliza seemed entirely rested from her journey, three days after, the little chapel was filled to its utmost capacity, the little organ pealed forth a wedding march as the two lovely brides and the handsome bridegrooms passed up the aisle upon a bed of roses, for all the children for miles around had brought flowers to strew the bride's pathway with flowers, hoping that they would be happy, and their pathway through life would be strewn with roses. After the minister had pronounced his

blessing upon them, they received the congratulations of their friends, when a novel sight met their gaze, as they turned to leave the church. Drawn up on either side of the doors, were the village school children, each with a basket full of beautiful flowers. As the two brides stood upon the threshold, the two first girls walked off throwing flowers in the way, and singing sweetly, then two others, and so on until they arrived at the carriages, where they again separated and stood in a long row each side of the pathway, so the bridal party would pass through the sight was both novel and affecting.

After the bridal party drove away, Mr. William Penn invited all the children up to the great house, where they had the pleasure of shaking hands with the whole party, and afterwards were served with a good bridal supper, much to their satisfaction and surprise.

"Well," said Ashton, after the little ones had departed, "I am so glad that I consented to come here to be married, for that little tribute is worth more than all the false glitter of society."

Ames stood proudly by his blushing bride and said : "Now, you see how my fair bride is appreciated. I am truly a happy man ; I never saw so fair a wedding."

The next day, trunks were sent off, and soon all took leave of the kind host and family. Ames promising to bring his wife to see them often, they whirled away with many good wishes following them.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GRAND RECEPTION.



THE evening after their arrival at home they had a grand reception. Of course, everybody was in readiness, for their cards had been out for some time, for all knew of the quiet wedding.

The grand saloon of the hotel was magnificently decorated. In the centre of the room was erected a splendid bridal arch, under which stood the bridal party, receiving their friends.

Mrs. Skiff wore a white satin dress, with an immense train, a wreath of orange-blossoms encircled her brow; her long veil was caught up with a golden comb at the back of her head, and hung in folds around her slender figure. Her jewels were diamonds.

Mrs. Moore was dressed also in her bridal robes of rich white silk, with lace overskirt, looped up

on either side with frosted rosebuds. Her jewels were a magnificent set of pearls, a present from her brother. Instead of her bridal wreath, she wore a bandeau of pearls, from which fell her solid lace veil in graceful folds around her.

The guests did not know which bride to admire the most, Annie, with her midnight beauty, which the sparkling gems set off, or Eliza, with her rippling light hair and heavenly blue eyes. The grooms were just the opposite—Ashton was dark, and Ames was fair.

After the reception was over they repaired to an opposite saloon, which was cleared for dancing, and Ashton offered Mrs. Skiff his arm, and Ames led off the charming Mrs. Moore, and the dance began in earnest. Everything was gotten up in elegant style, and every one seemed to enjoy themselves very much. The supper-table was superb. Everybody was delighted. Then, to the surprise of the two brides, a door was thrown open, which displayed a table loaded with presents. At the head of the table was a magnificent silver service for Mrs. Skiff, at the foot another for Mrs. Moore. Silver ladles, fruit-knives, castors, fish-knives, silver salts, fruit-baskets, and every conceivable thing for the table was displayed to view, with the giver's name attached.

After they had looked at the presents to their hearts' content, they repaired to the saloon, where they enjoyed themselves till near morning, when all separated, after drinking to the future happiness of the bridal party.

So ended the happy bridal reception ; but I wonder if they felt any happier than at the simple country wedding !





CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROSA LYNN IN A NEW RÔLE.



WE must leave our friends in their happiness, and follow the fortunes of Rosa Lynn. When Ames left her at Vicksburg, she cared not which way she drifted. She would not enter into her old life again as circus-rider. Being of a romantic turn of mind, she thought she would engage in some menial capacity; and forthwith she traced her way to the great city of New York, where she sought and obtained a situation as lady's maid, through the medium of the *New York Herald*.

The lady with whom she engaged herself had just returned from Europe. She was an only daughter, and an heiress. When Rosa stood before her, she was amazed at such beauty.

Julia was fain to think that if Rosa moved in the same circle as herself, she would have a worthy rival.

Well, Rosa was duly installed. One morning, after dressing Julia's hair, she looked around the elegantly furnished chamber, leaned her hand upon the back of a chair, and soliloquized thus :

"Well, this is a delightful change for one who has been accustomed to command. I suppose I must obey, for a time at least. I must call this piece of perfection 'my lady,' and bow and cringe as though I were in the presence of royalty itself. Ah! as my poor old ring-master used to say, 'Child, you are born, but not buried.' Who knows but one of these days I will be some great lady? Yes, yes; I feel it will—it must be so. Oh! why was I not born rich instead of handsome," and she sighed, and stood before the mirror gazing intently at her beautiful face and charming figure reflected therein.

At this moment, the door was thrown open, and Julia stood on the threshold in astonishment, saying: "Well, I declare you must think yourself beautiful. Here I have been waiting and calling you for half an hour, and you seemed deaf to everything but your handsome self. Come, my girl!

you will find that you can make yourself more useful than by looking at yourself all day. But never mind ; you are forgiven for your vanity this time for I think myself that you are very pretty. Come now, be quick ! I want you to dress my hair, for I am going to dine with Mrs. Ashton Moore, the great beauty that came over in the steamer with me." And, as Julia seated herself, she surveyed the room, and said, petulantly : ' Rosa, I do think that you might have arranged things a little while I was out, so I would not have to break my neck over them ! "

" I believe, madame, that you engaged me to arrange your toilet, not to be chamber-maid," said Rosa, with asperity.

Julia, greatly excited, sprang from her chair and confronted Rosa, saying : " Don't dare to call me madame. You must know that I am soon to be Sir Edward Clifton's wife, and you shall call me ' my lady. ' "

" Just as I thought ! " said Rosa, with contempt. " Your calling yourself a lady most assuredly does not make you one ; but, as you have given me my orders, I will proceed with your toilet, madame," and, as Rosa combed her long hair out, she gave several vigorous pulls which made poor Julia cry out :

"Why, Rosa, you will pull all the hair out of my head! My, how you do hurt!" and she put her hands to her head.

"Well, there is plenty more at the hair-dresser's, you can easily match the remnant," said Rosa, spitefully, completing the toilet.

Julia flaunted about the room, admired herself in the glass, and left word for Rosa to fix up things. When left alone, Rosa said aloud, as the door closed upon Julia: "Well, when I look around at all this fashion and display in one so utterly void of principle, I do but wonder why this world's goods are so unequally divided. Not that I am envious or vain—oh, not at all! but I do think that all this wealth would set better on me than it does on her. What am I, and who am I, that these thoughts will continually intrude themselves upon me?"

Scarcely had she uttered these words when Mrs. Saunders, the mother of Julia, entered the room, and seeing Rosa approach the mirror, she called out to her: "As usual, Rosa, at the glass! Well, you must really think yourself beautiful. Now, if you take my advice, you will attend to your business—that is, to attend to your mistress, or you will find yourself dismissed at short notice."

Rosa, who was not in the least disturbed by

this threat, said : " Well, madame, you can dismiss me at any moment that you will pay me."

Mrs. Saunders said, in an excited voice : " And there is my daughter, who will marry Sir Edward Clifton, I want you to understand, as well as any other menial, that you must call her ' my lady. ' "

" Very well, madame ; when she becomes ' my lady ' I'll call her so ; but I do not now intend to call her out of her name. Her manners never will give her that title, only the position of Sir Edward will do that," said Rosa, coolly.

" No more impudence, miss ; but do as I tell you," and with these words the irate lady flaunted out of the room.

Rosa fell back upon the lounge, and drew forth a picture from her bosom, shed tears, and said aloud, after gazing at the picture for some time : " Never mind ; I'll be a great lady some day, I feel it here," placing here hand upon her heart.





CHAPTER XXXV.

SIR EDWARD AT THE CLUB-ROOM.



T a table of a richly-furnished club-room sat four gentlemen playing cards, when one of them, as he threw down a card, called out : " I say, Sir Edward, are you going to the grand ball?—of course, you must, to see what the Americans can do in that line. I'll bet you never saw such an array of beauty in your life as you will see collected there—"

" Stop there, Raymond. I think, when you come to see an English ball and English beauties, then you'll give in," said the handsome Englishman, Clarence Hawthorne.

" Well, gentlemen, I certainly will do myself the honor to attend this grand ball given in honor of Miss Saunders's return to her native land, and will be most happy to meet you all there."

" I wonder who that little beauty is that I met in the hall the other day ! By Jove, such eyes I

never saw! She must be some poor relation whom they are afraid to be let seen," said young Bert Howard.

"Hush! Bert, you know you are treading on dangerous ground," said Charles Raymond.

"Hold on, Charlie! I hope I've said nothing offensive, but she is, without exception, the prettiest little thing I ever saw, and about the merriest. She came along the hall singing as sweetly as a bird. Oh! such a voice! It was enough to make a fellow think that he was listening to the song of an angel, but this is not playing cards. I say, what's trumps—Hearts?"

"By the pricking of my thumb,
Something wicked this way comes,"

said Charles Raymond, laughing, as Wallace, valet to Sir Edward, entered with a note, which he gave to Sir Edward, who read it, then folded it carefully and stood up, raised his glass, and said, smilingly: "Gentlemen—

"Let's drink to the health of my lady fair,
Whose sparkling black eyes and raven hair,
In truth, this poor heart of mine did ensnare."

They all drank the health of Sir Edward's lady love, when Clarence Hawthorne said; "Now, gentlemen—

“Indeed I feel it our duty
To drink to the health of Bert’s little beauty.”

After they drank, Bert Howard arose and thanked them, saying : “ Now, gentlemen, before we part, let us have a general toast.”

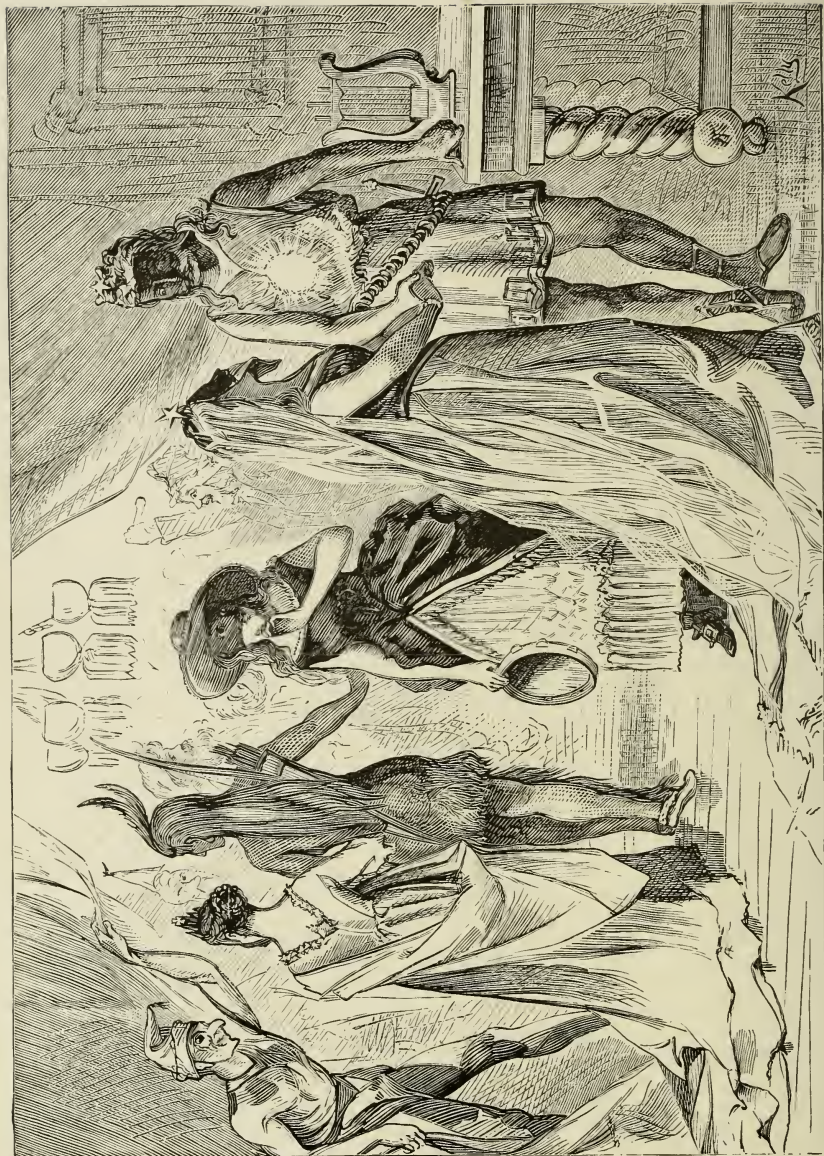
They at once arose to their feet, with their glasses lifted high, and sang :

“Hère’s to the health of all Eve’s fair daughters,
On this and the other side of the waters ;
With very few faults, and a great many charms,
Will be glad to find our companions in arms.”

After this compliment to charming woman, the friends separated with the promise of meeting at the mask ball.

Bert Howard sprang out of the door, waving an adieu with his hat, saying : “ Well, gentlemen, I’m off to dream of my sweet little singing bird—adieu ! ”





"THE MASKED BALL."

"Who'er will cross my hand with gold will have his fortune truly told!"



CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MASK BALL.



THE handsome drawing-room of Mrs. Sinclair was crowded. The scene was picturesque in the extreme—there were lords and ladies, knights of old, shepherds, minstrels, flower-girls, fortune-tellers and everything else.

Sir Edward Clifton made a fine Apollo, Julia looked splendidly as Aurora, Clarence Hawthorne as a gallant knight, the lively Bert Howard as an old minstrel, but who is this little gypsy fortune-teller, who, as Apollo approaches, sings out :

“Whoe’er will cross my hand with gold
Will have his fortune truly told.”

The handsome Apollo placed a piece of gold in the open palm, and she took his hand, traced the lines therein, when she archly told him that he had lately crossed the seas in pursuit of some object that seemed to be surrounded with mystery ; and

it would only be solved by some meddlesome young person.

“But, my girl, who seems to be connected with this mystery?” said Apollo, as he bent his lordly head over the hand which she still retained.

“Oh! I see a lonely man wandering over mountains and hills in unrest. Presently, he crosses a great ocean, with his noble heart fired with love, and in pursuing one thing finds the other, which he has sought for many years.”

“Hold!” cried Apollo. “It is enough.” And he turned away to seek Aurora, whom he found listening to the song of the minstrel, whose sweet, rich tones filled the room with melody.

Presently, room was made for the tambourine girl, and she danced with her tambourine, to the delight of every one. After which Apollo and Aurora led off the dance, which lords and ladies, knights, and everybody joined in.

The minstrel and gypsy fortune-teller seemed to be inseparable. It was he who danced with her; it was he who escorted her in to supper; but it was not he who escorted her home; for, like Cinderella, as the clock struck twelve, she made her escape, and the poor minstrel was left to pass his time in conjecturing what manner of gypsy she was.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STORMY SCENE AT BREAKFAST.



THE morning after the ball, as Mrs. Saunders and her daughter, Julia, were seated at breakfast, that lady relieved herself of her ill-humor in this wise :

“ Well, I declare ! if that don’t beat anything I ever heard of. Just to think of that budget of impudence going off to a ball given in honor of my daughter ! My daughter, who will soon be a great lady ! ”

“ Yes ; and to think that he should be so captivated by her sweet voice (as he said), that she had such winning ways ; and he squeezed her hand at parting. Oh, ma ! was ever anything so shameful ? ” said the beautiful Julia.

At this moment they heard Rosa singing in the hall, “ The Poor Gypsy Maid.”

“ Now, just listen to that ! ” said Mrs. Saunders. Do you think that I will put up with that much longer, Julia ? No, not if you will have to do without a maid altogether ; really, if that girl

comes in here, I'll be tempted to throw a cup at her head, that I will!"

Just as she ceased speaking, Rosa came in with her apron full of flowers, still singing, when Mrs. Saunders sprang up from the table, and shook her by the shoulders, which caused her to drop the flowers, while she cried out in anger: "You little imp of Satan, what put it into your crazy head to run off to the ball last night, and mingle with your betters?"

Rosa laughed, "Ha, ha, ha! My betters! Now, madame, if you will just raise your heavy hand off my delicate shoulder, I will explain. Well! in the first place, I don't acknowledge any one as my betters; in the second, I wanted to see in a ball-room, and thought I would be safe in that disguise, as no one would recognize me as Miss Julia's maid; and in the third place, I wanted to see how my mistress would 'queen it' in English society. Now I am fully satisfied on all points."

Julia looked up and said, softly: "Mother, do let the girl alone. Rosa, how did I look last night—don't you think I was dressed better than any one there?"

"I do think you and your Apollo were the handsomest couple in the room," said Rosa; "now, that's the truth."

Mrs. Saunders drew Rosa before her as she seated herself, holding her hand, saying mildly: "Well, Rosa, if I forgive you this time, will you ever try it again?—but I know you will soon get into some other scrape. I really don't know why I keep you about me, that's a fact!"

"Ma, I think Rosa had better take the housemaid's place, don't you?"

"Well, my dear, I really think so myself. Now, consider your position changed," said the condescending madame.

"All right, ladies," answered Rosa; "if you are satisfied, I'm sure I will be. Anything so I will remain in peace," so saying, Rosa made good her escape, before they should reprimand her for her impudence again.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ROSA AS HOUSE-MAID.



ONE morning while Rosa was dusting the handsome parlor, she stopped, and said aloud : " Now, I rather like the change ; here I am left all to myself, free as a bird, no more to be frowned at or scolded.—and another thing, now I can get a peep at the gentry, and will be a fine lady. Let me see how I would act were I a lady," and she tried all the chairs, then went up to the grand piano, ran her fingers nimbly over the keys, but started back as though she were terribly frightened, saying : " Oh, my, ain't that nice, but it will bring them all about my ears. I'll stop at once, because I'll have to hurry up now ; but the next time I come down I'll have to put on one of Julia's dresses."

While Rosa was dusting the chairs and singing to herself, the door opened, and the gay young Bert Howard advanced into the room, offered her

his hand, as with a smile he said, "Well, my pretty Miss, how are you this fine morning?"

Rosa bowed and said as she drew herself away : "I am not Miss Julia, sir, you are mistaken."

"Well, my pretty one," said the young man, "I know you are not Miss Julia, but cannot we make friends ; this is, indeed, an unexpected pleasure. I have known you for a long time, and had almost given up the idea of meeting you," and he continued, coaxingly, "Come, sit down by my side, and let us have an old-fashioned talk."

As he caught Rosa by the hand, she struggled and freed herself, crying out : "Oh, I cannot stay ; here comes Miss Julia," and she made a courtesy, and vanished through the door.

Bert started in pursuit, but as she closed the door with a bang, as much as to say, "You dare not follow," he turned back, muttering to himself, "That's just my luck, here I have been chasing a butterfly three months, and just as I thought I had caught it, why it flies off."

The door opened softly, and the aggravating Rosa peeped archly at him, and said : "Sir! did you tell me not to *slam it?*" and before he could catch her as he expected, she slammed the door and was gone.

As poor Bert turned away disappointed, he found

himself face to face with Julia and a lady friend, who had entered by the side door. Julia looked elegant in her dark green riding habit, which fitted her exquisitely. Her cheeks were blooming with the healthful exercise ; she cordially welcomed Bert, who was a favorite with everybody.

As he bent over the extended hand, she exclaimed : " Why, Mr. Howard, we missed you so much in our morning ride ; do sit down. I am delighted to see you. I suppose you will soon join us at the Springs. You know that we start in a few days."

" I think it likely that I shall," said Bert, confusedly. " I shall be much pleased to join you there. Will you take your little singing bird along, Miss Julia ?"

" What singing bird, Mr. Howard ? "

" Why the little girl that I have met in the hall several times, and no matter how early or late, she is always singing merrily," said Bert, timidly.

Julia leaned back and laughed heartily, when she could find utterance ; she told him that was only a servant girl. First, her dressing-maid, who, for her impudence, was promoted to be maid-of-all-work.

Bert felt his cheeks glow with indignation at this flippant speech, but was saved from further embarrassment by the entrance of a young lady friend

in morning costume, whom Julia covered with kisses, as she exclaimed : “ Why, Helen dear, why did you not come in time to join us in our morning’s ride? I was so much grieved at your absence.”

The young lady, with a sweet lisp, which I think a piece of affectation, answered : “ Oh, my darling, I have been doing much better than that. I have been shopping with mamma. You know we leave for Long Branch the latter part of next week, where I hope you will all join us.”

Julia turned to say something to Bert, but that gentleman very unceremoniously took his leave when she was showering Helen with kisses.

When she found that he had truly taken flight, she exclaimed : “ It is nothing more than I expected ; I suppose he has gone in pursuit of his singing bird.”





CHAPTER XXXIX.

SIR EDWARD'S RESOLUTION.



IN a richly-furnished private parlor in the St. Nicholas Hotel, were two gentlemen, Sir Edward Clifton, and his handsome valet, Wallace, who was busy writing a letter.

Sir Edward raised himself from his reclining position, shook the ashes from his cigar, and said, softly : " Wallace ! I am not satisfied with things as they are going on. You are in every sense a gentleman ; as highly bred as myself ; and yet you are willing to bend your proud neck, and play valet to me in this country. Now, my boy, no one here knows anything about the fatal duel. I think it is time you should resume your name and station, if not your title."

Wallace raised his head, and answered : " Not yet, Edward. I want to win and wed that little singing bird (as Bert calls her) in my present station, and I'll be the happiest of men."

"You forget me, Wallace! Don't you know that I am glad the ladies are all gone to the sea-shore? I'll just step over some day and see this little singing bird myself. How old do you think she is?"

They were here interrupted by Clarence Hawthorne, who threw himself into a chair, and asked, "Well, gentlemen, what's the news?"

"Nothing new, except the ladies have left for the sea-shore," said Sir Edward. "I really don't know how we shall employ our time. Now, I have a strong desire to see Bert's little prodigy, and some day we must take a stroll in Central Park. Oh! that will be the most appropriate place to tell you the sad history of my past life, and the strange oath of mine when a mere boy. Somehow or other I have a strong presentiment that this very girl has something to do with my oath, Wallace."

"You may just as well tell it now, and we will help you out with it," said Clarence.

"No; I will wait until we reach some romantic nook in the park, and it will make me more eager to fulfill that oath. Suppose we start now; or, shall we step over to the house, pretending we did not know that the ladies were out of town? Then we can have some music, for Charles says she can play and sing divinely."

“There’s romance in that,” said Clarence, as he lighted a cigar. “Who ever heard of a genuine domestic having such refinement and such musical abilities? I’ll bet my life she is some girl who has perhaps followed some lover, and he has tired of her and cast her off, and she is too proud to go home, so seeks an honest living as a domestic.”

“Well, even if that is the case, I admire her spirit,” said Wallace.

So saying, the three friends left the room.





CHAPTER XL.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN SIR EDWARD AND ROSA.



WHEN the gentlemen reached the mansion of Mrs. Saunders, Sir Edward requested that his companions be shown into the library, while he had a private interview with Miss Rosa. The porter, who had looked upon him for a long time as one of the family, acceded to his request immediately, and he proceeded to the drawing-room, from whence came ravishing strains of music. He opened the door softly, and stood enraptured upon the threshold.

As Rosa finished the piece, she raised her eyes for the first time, and met those of Sir Edward fixed intently upon her. She immediately arose and tried to escape, but he seemed determined not to be foiled in that way. He sprang forward and caught her hand. She begged to be released, saying, she meant no harm; that she was not Miss Julia.

Very beautiful did she look as she stood blushing and paling before the great nobleman.

As she spoke in a pleading voice, Sir Edward held her hand the tighter, and cried out in a voice of agony, "Girl! who and what are you, and why did you play that old grand familiar march, every sound of which touched a respondent chord in my heart? When last I heard that grand march it was played by one as fair as yourself, but whose young life, alas! was soon clouded over with misery! But tell me, my good girl, something of yourself."

"Oh, sir!" said Rosa, weeping bitterly, "I know nothing at all of my past history up to the time I was put with the great circus to earn my own living."

Sir Edward was shocked to hear her speak of the circus, but said kindly: "You certainly could not have made yourself proficient in music while in the circus, could you, child?"

"Oh, no, sir. When I was riding in the circus, there came a boy one day and joined the troupe; that boy had sisters at home, so he took me as his little sister abroad, and, oh, I loved him so much! Well, he left the circus and took me to a great city, and educated me, and was glad when I left the circus. But, one day I quarreled with him, and so

we parted, and I thought I would come where no one knew me and earn my own living."

Sir Edward coaxed her to play once more, and then he would not trespass upon her time any longer, he said.

Rosa played several brilliant pieces, much to the surprise of Sir Edward, after which he pressed her hand, thanking her kindly, and took his leave.

When she had closed the door upon that noble form, Rosa threw herself upon the sofa, saying: "Oh, why did he gaze into my eyes so long, what am I to him? Why has he so much power over me? I'm nothing but a poor circus-rider, and he is a grand gentleman. Ah! who knows, but some of these fine days, I will be a great lady? Oh, my! but I will cut a dash when I am a great lady. I know I am as pretty as a picture," and as usual, Rosa's vanity carried her before the mirror, when, to her great surprise, the door was thrown open, and, without ceremony, Bert Howard walked in.

He approached her saying: "Well, what is my singing bird doing with herself nowadays? Come, Rosa, I have only a few moments to stay, and a great deal to tell you in that time."

But Rosa said archly: "Oh! you're talking in your sleep," and, as she turned away, she would have escaped, had not he caught her around her

waist and seated her upon a sofa, where he told her the something, too sweet for our ears at present.

When he arose to go, he said : “ Well, faint heart never did win fair lady,” and, with a wave and kiss of the hand, he was gone before Rosa could remonstrate.





CHAPTER XLI.

SIR EDWARD RELATES HIS PROMISED STORY.



IN a shady and romantic nook in the grand Central Park sat Sir Edward and his three friends ; when he spoke as follows :

“ Now, gentlemen, I think this is the proper time and place to relate what I promised, about twenty years ago, I had a loved sister, whom we all idolized, just budding into lovely womanhood. She, of course, had many admirers, among whom was a young Spaniard, a perfect Apollo.

“ Well, he was her shadow, following her everywhere. At last he made bold to ask her hand in honorable marriage, but our father sternly repulsed and forbade him the house, for he had given her hand in marriage to an old lord.

“ Antonio’s wrath burst forth, and he took an oath that he would have her, and well did he keep his word ; they were both young, and both loved each other ardently.

“ Finally my sister was married with great pomp and ceremony to Lord Estre, and went to live in the old ancestral hall of the Estres. Everything went off quietly. My sister was often seen to go out into the garden at night, and meet a man who always had a cloak wrapped around him.

“ Well, time wore on, and a beautiful child was born to them. Still the lovers, for such they were, met in the garden. The servants all loved their mistress, and kept her secret.

“ One night I crept into the garden, as my sister flew to his embrace. In his eagerness to fold her in his arms, the cloak fell from his shoulders, and I recognized Antonio, my sister’s former lover. The next thing that happened was, after an absence of several days, the old lord came home to find his wife and child gone.

“ When it became known, I knew directly that it was Antonio with whom she had fled, and, boy as I was, I made a vow to follow them all over the world. Now I have been in every clime, in every country on the globe.

“ I found them in Italy, where poor Antonio died in my arms, entirely forgiven by me. I never saw such devotion shown to a wife as he showed to my sister. After the funeral I tried to persuade her to return home with me. She said that if I

would go home and see if father would forgive and receive her she would go with me ; but that night she escaped from the house, and I have never seen her since.

“When poor Antonio was gasping his last in my arms, he begged me to take care of his wife and his little pearl, and see that no harm came to them. I promised solemnly, with the tears chasing each other down my cheeks. He told me also, before he died, that they were married immediately upon their arrival in Italy, ‘for,’ said he, ‘she was my angel-wife in heaven, and I was determined no man should separate us on earth.’

“Although I never saw my sister since that night, I have heard her voice, and have seen her, as she was then, in the person of ‘Bert’s singing bird.’ Yes, gentlemen,” said he, rising, “I believe that girl is my lost pearl. I feel like this girl has a claim upon me. If it is so, my cup of happiness is full.”

“Have you any particular mark by which you could identify her?” inquired Clarence Hawthorne.

“I often noticed, while an infant, a cluster of grapes or berries upon her left shoulder,” said Sir Edward.

Bert Howard sprang to his feet and cried excitedly, waving his hat, “I’ll bet my hat that my

little singing bird is no low-born maid-of-all-work!"

"Did you ever hear her play the piano, Bert?" asked Sir Edward.

"No! I did not know that she could play upon the piano; but this I do know, that she has played the deuce with my heart." And the gay-hearted fellow gave a long sigh as he placed his hand over his heart.

"Hush, Bert," said Charles Raymond, "there are ladies coming this way," as voices were heard near them, and while he was still speaking, Rosa, with two other girls, stood face to face with the gentlemen.

The girls turned to escape, but Wallace and Bert started in pursuit, and brought back Rosa in triumph, who pleaded earnestly, "Do let me go, gentlemen; we were just hurrying home"—and the merry girl took a medallion from her bosom and made out that she had a watch, and said, "Oh! dear, it is past our time," but unfortunately, just as she was going to replace it, it fell to the ground. Wallace immediately picked it up, saying, playfully, "Why, bless me, this is a handsome time-piece!"

Rosa held out her hand and begged him to return the locket to her, for it was all on earth she had to love.

Sir Edward approached Rosa, and said : " Will you allow me to look at your precious time-piece?"

Wallace gave it into his hands, when he opened the case, and, starting back, grew pale as death. When he could gain utterance, he cried out : " Oh, my dear girl, where did you get this trinket? look, Wallace, it is the face of our long lost Maud." Wallace opened the other side, and Sir Edward exclaimed : " And this is the unfortunate Antonio."

Turning to the affrighted Rosa, who was trembling lest they should keep her precious locket, Sir Edward said with great agitation : " Speak, girl, who gave you this locket?"

" I have worn that locket ever since I can remember," said the affrighted girl. " Mr. Raymond said that I must never part with it, that some day I would be a fine lady, and that I must try and be as good as that lady in the locket, for I was just as beautiful. I never knew the beautiful lady, but I have always loved her."

" Sir Edward," said Charles Raymond, " I would advise you to investigate this matter at once, and settle this little one in some way. It is evident that she does not belong to the common class of working girls."

" Yes, that's just what Miss Julia is all the time saying," said the maid that was with Rosa, " that she

thinks herself too much of a lady, and she is impudent. That's just what we had to change places for. Now, gentlemen, if you will only allow us to go home, it is past our time, and Rosa is quite overcome."

"Certainly we will permit you to go, my good girl, but Rosa must go with me ; she is mine, without doubt. I will summon the family without delay." So saying, they made preparations for their departure. Sir Edward drew Rosa's hand within his arm, while Wallace called the coachmen, and when all were ready, the two carriages rolled away. Soon they alighted in front of the hotel ; the maid was put down at her own door, dreadfully perplexed at the turn of affairs.





CHAPTER XLII.

THE FAMILY AT HOME.



WHEN Mrs. Saunders was summoned home, she could not tell what was the cause, but as Sir Edward sent the summons, she dared not question, but immediately made preparations for a speedy departure. People wondered at the most fashionable set leaving so soon.

Notwithstanding all the surmises, the Saunders family arrived safely at home. When Mrs. Saunders found that Rosa had gone away, she accosted Julia at the breakfast table with "Julia, dear, I cannot see for the life of me, where that little ungrateful wretch has taken herself off to, I cannot get one word out of May, only that she met some gentlemen at the park, and that Rosa went in a carriage with them. Now, that looks strange, you know, to say the least."

"Pshaw! Mother, cannot you see through that!

I'm sure the thing is plain enough. Rosa is a pretty girl and smart enough too, and she has been meeting a lover, who, of course, has taken advantage of our absence, to persuade the vain girl to elope. Now, there is spice and romance in it after all," and Julia leaned back and laughed heartily.

The servant at this moment announced Mr. Howard.

Now, as Bert was an old and intimate friend of the family, Mrs. Saunders invited him in the breakfast room. Bert entered, his face beaming with good humor. He gave each lady a hand to shake, as he, smiling, inquired after their health. Then he drew a letter from his pocket, gave it to Julia, and turned to Mrs. Saunders, with Sir Edward's compliments to her, and said he asked permission to bring a friend of his in the evening, when he would be most happy to pay his respects to the ladies. They granted this seemingly simple request, and Bert's mission being fulfilled, he took his departure, leaving the ladies to surmise who could be the mysterious visitor.

When evening came, Julia was resplendent in diamonds, and with impatience awaited the coming of Sir Edward. Shortly after eight o'clock the party were announced. Sir Edward entered the drawing-room with Rosa leaning upon his arm.

She wore a lavender-colored silk, with train, and elegant diamonds in her raven hair. As Julia stood by her mother to receive the friend of her intended husband, she raised her eyes to encounter the flashing orbs of Rosa. Julia gave a scream, and would have fallen had not the noble-hearted Bert Howard sprung forward and supported her.

Rosa said: "I did not mean to frighten you so, Julia, dear. Come, uncle is ready to clasp you to his great heart. Speak to me, Julia." But Julia was speechless with surprise. When she did recover the first words which greeted Sir Edward were—"And this was he whom she eloped with."

Sir Edward left Rosa in the hands of Bert, and, taking the cold hand of Julia, said, gently: "Why, my love, what do you mean? Did you ever doubt my love for you? Have I not proved my sincerity? Will you not shortly be my honored wife? And do you begrudge the morsel of affection that I have given to my own sister's child?" He rested the proud head of Julia upon his broad bosom, and gave a full explanation, and poor Julia was overcome and shed penitential tears at the recital of the hardships of Rosa. When Sir Edward had finished, he kissed her marble brow, and said, gently: "Will my darling receive my dear sister's child as her sister and equal?"

Julia arose and clasped Rosa to her heart and said : " Rosa ! Rosa ! forgive, forgive me ! and love me just a little. I have no sister ; come, come, to my heart ! " And the two girls wept in each other's arms.

When Rosa withdrew from Julia's embrace, she raised her streaming eyes to Heaven, and fell upon her knees, saying, with fervor : " Oh, my heavenly Father, I thank thee for keeping me safe through all my trials to this hour of infinite love, and mercy towards me."

Bert and her uncle raised her gently and placed her upon a chair, when Mrs. Saunders said, in a choked voice : " Rosa, come to my heart, henceforth you shall be as a daughter," and the old lady nearly suffocated Rosa in her endeavors to make peace.

Bert came to the rescue, and offering his arm to Rosa, which she was glad to accept, led her to the open window, where she soon recovered her strength and spirits.

Sir Edward was happy indeed, for, said he, gallantly : " Have I not found my lost pearl, and do I not possess one of America's brightest gems ? Now, Julia, set the day for our nuptials, for I must soon depart for the land of my birth, as I wish to show my pearl the spot where she was born."

At this moment Bert led the blushing Rosa before her uncle, and in the most gallant style imaginable, knelt before him, and asked the hand of his fair niece, saying, archly : “ Had I not pursued the damsel, you ne’er would have caught her.”

Sir Edward said : “ My gallant knight, has your wooing been in the most approved style ? ”

Bert said, laughing : “ If not in the most approved style, I can most assuredly say, it has been done in the most romantic style, and we are willing to finish it in the same style by eloping.”

“ Nay, nay, my lord, we’ll have no elopement in the case. If Rosa (or Maud, as we shall henceforth call her) is inclined to favor your suit, I will have no objection, to not only your sailing in the same vessel with us to Europe, but you may sail your bark upon the sea of matrimony at the same time we launch ours out.”

The happy young couple were satisfied, and the day was set for a grand double wedding. All were delighted but poor Wallace, who had tried to win the lady’s hand for himself. All knew that he had been only playing valet to his cousin, Sir Edward, and he had now consented to accompany the bridal party to Europe.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.



REAT preparations were made for two weddings. The lovers spent their time riding or sailing, but did not attempt to go to the Springs again. Invitations were sent to all the watering places, to the surprise of everybody, and all the fashionable world was collected in New York by the tenth of September. Trinity Church was crowded to its utmost capacity. The grand organ swelled out a joyous, grand wedding-march, as the lovely brides approached the altar. Both wore white satin robes, with immense trains, and lace overskirts, with veils and orange wreaths. Neither wore jewelry of any kind. There was a goodly sprinkling of the diplomatic corps, and the gay uniforms of the army and navy, for Bert Howard was a gallant officer in the army, and Charles Raymond was an officer in the navy.

Bert really looked elegant in his full uniform, and marched proudly from the altar with his lovely bride upon his arm. The street before the door was crowded. The ushers found it difficult to make a passage-way to the carriages.

They soon arrived at the mansion of Mrs. Saunders, where the two brides stood proudly by their husbands and received their guests with grace and ease.

But why does Maud turn pale and tremble, as a lady and gentleman stand before her? The gentleman takes her trembling hand, while their eyes meet, and she faintly murmurs: "Ames!" while he answers as gently: "Rosa!" He presents his lovely wife, when the color comes back to her face, and she is put at ease by the sweet voice of Annie Skiff wishing her joy, both upon her marriage and her voyage.

As the time was pressing, and all wanted to wish them joy, Ames and his wife passed on, leaving Bert wondering why his wife's cheek paled at the approach of Ames Skiff.

When everybody were enjoying cake and wine, the two brides left Mrs. Saunders to entertain, and repaired to their rooms and donned their traveling costumes, and as they descended the stairs they were met by their happy husbands, who had done like-

wise, and they soon bade adieu to their friends. As the carriages rolled away, old shoes, and other things, for good luck, were thrown after them.

Some few intimate friends accompanied them to the vessel. Among them was Ames, who was the last to bid Rosa good-bye. As the noble vessel rode out of harbor, the bridal party waved their adieus from the upper deck, and they were soon out on the ocean wave.





CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CONFLAGRATION.



WHEN the party returned from the vessel, and was nearing the house, their ears were assailed by the cry of fire. Without waiting for the carriage to stop, Ames, who had left his wife at the house, burst open the door and leaped upon the pavement, and, with a few bounds, was at the door of the house, which he found to be on fire. When he left, a short time before, all was joyous and happy, and now his ears were assailed with the shrieks of fainting women, and the hoarse shouts of the firemen as they called to their comrades for water.

The crowd was so dense that Ames and his companions could scarcely elbow their way through, but owing to his great anxiety for his helpless wife, he made a super-human effort, and at last reached her side as she sat moaning piteously upon a sofa, surrounded by several shrieking, frantic women.

No one could tell how the fire originated, but certain it was that it had made great headway before it was discovered, when those who were in the saloon, dancing, were nearly suffocated with the dense smoke which enveloped them.

As Ames rushed through the crowd to where his wife sat with her head buried in her hands, he caught the words: "Oh, why did my husband leave me?" He knelt beside her, drew her hands from her face, and said, hurriedly: "Annie, darling, your husband stands before you to rescue you, or perish with you. Come, be of good cheer, all is not lost yet," and he took the gentle being, who clung to him as the ivy to the oak, and led her to the door, but was forced to draw back as a stream of water came pouring in from the hose. When this was over he placed his arm around her slender waist, and dragged her half fainting out the door. Seeing the danger of others, she begged him to leave her out in the fresh air, and save some of the timid ones inside the burning building.

Ames put her in a place of safety, and ventured boldly in, and his form was seen everywhere. When the flames arrested his progress, his sonorous voice would be heard shouting to the firemen to pour a stream of water around him, and in this manner he was the means of saving many a faint-

ing woman from being burned to death ; for where they could have been saved, they were too timid to venture, and those who went to save them passed on to those who were more courageous.

As Ames was wiping the water from his face, standing in front of the house, congratulating himself that all were saved, a piercing shriek rent the air, and all eyes were immediately turned in the direction of an upper window, from whence came the sound, and, to the amazement of all, there stood Mrs. Saunders, wringing her hands in despair. The poor woman had escaped on the first alarm to collect some valuable papers and trinkets. When she had secured them, she started for the stairs, upon reaching which she found the flames licking around the balustrades, and all communication entirely cut off from below; then it was that she rushed wildly to the window, calling for help and wringing her hands.

The walls were hot and the flames were fork-tongued, and leaped around her in fantastic shapes, as though laughing at her misery.

At this fearful moment, the deep-toned voice of Ames was heard above the roaring of the flames, as he shouted : " Pour a broad stream upon the front, and bring a ladder." In an instant, several hoses were turned on the front of the house ; still,

amid smoke and flame, the form of the poor woman could be distinctly seen, as if imploring help, though her lips were mute.

The vast multitude held their breath in speechless horror, when a man fearlessly ascended the ladder with a fireman's hat and coat on. As he reached the window, he drew the half fainting woman towards him, but with the greatest difficulty succeeded in getting her out of the window, for she was a very heavy woman. When the man reached the pavement, a tremendous shout rent the air, for every one knew that it was Ames Skiff who had borrowed the fireman's coat and hat.

The firemen worked nobly to save the surrounding buildings, and shout after shout rent the air, as the flames were finally subdued. The poor men were making preparations for their departure, when Ames Skiff kindly invited them to supper, which was served from a restaurant near by.

As the men stood around the tables, they gave three hearty cheers for our hero, who gracefully acknowledged the compliment, and giving orders for whatever was required to the keeper, waved an adieu with his hat, and made his escape amid a tremendous shout.

Before he took the men to supper, he had sent his wife and Mrs. Saunders in a carriage to his own

home, where they had every attention from the servants.

When he passed where the handsome house had stood in the morning full of life and gayety, he beheld nothing but the smouldering ruins, where now and then a sharp tongue of fire would shoot out the débris.





CHAPTER XLV.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.



SOME time after the great conflagration, as Ames was sitting in his office, the postman brought in a letter to him. He hastily broke the seal, when, to his great surprise, it was a summons to the death-bed of Mr. Penn, the father of his wife. How to break the dreadful news, he did not know; but, at last, his resolve was taken. He took his hat, and left the office. When he arrived, Annie ran to receive her usual kiss. Now something unusual in his countenance caused her to inquire the cause, as he placed the letter in her hand, and went towards the window until after its perusal. Then she called in a faint voice :

“Ames, there is no time to lose. Had we not better start in the morning? Oh! I would not have my dear father’s spirit take its flight before I gazed once more upon his beloved features.”

Ames put his arm around Annie, and leaned her head upon his shoulder, when she had a good, quiet cry, which seemed to relieve her very much. When she became tranquil, he raised her head and kissed her gently, bidding her get together what things she required and be ready to start that night, then she would be ready for her duties in the sick-room in the morning. To say a thing was as good as having it already done with Ames. When he returned in the evening, he found his wife anxiously waiting for him. He also found pleasant quarters on a steamer. So, when they reached M——, the next morning, she was not as tired as she expected to be.

That was a mournful group which had assembled to welcome her home. They led her upon tiptoe into the room where the beloved form of her noble father lay in the last throes of death.

The doctor would not send for her until all hope of his recovery was gone ; so when she reached his bedside, his life was fast ebbing away. As Annie and Ames bent lovingly over the dying man, he opened his eyes and fixed them intently upon them, murmured : “ God bless you, my children ! ” and closed them again.

Annie kneeled by his bed-side, her hand clasped in his icy one, and her head buried in the counter-

pane. Ames stood over her with his hand resting upon her bowed head.

William Penn and his wife stood at the foot of the bed, and poor Mrs. Penn moaned piteously as she buried her face in the cold hand of her idolized husband, who, without a sigh or murmur, passed gently away, seeming perfectly well satisfied to have his family go with him to the edge of the dark river, where he was sure of his guide, to pass him over the cold waters in safety, to the celestial fields beyond.

For a long time there was silence, broken only by the sobs of the poor afflicted widow and daughter.

Then the doctor gently lifted Mrs. Penn, telling her that all was over.

Ames led his wife away, while Will did the same, and forthwith preparation was made for the funeral.

In two days after, all that was mortal of Mr. Penn was consigned to the silent tomb. A large concourse of friends followed him to the grave, for he was greatly beloved.

After the funeral, Annie wanted her mother to accompany her home, but she refused, saying, she would never leave the home of her youth, and she remained with Will Penn, and her daughter took a tearful leave of all, to follow the fortunes of the man she loved.



CHAPTER XLVI.

A FLYING VISIT OUT WEST.



THE deep mourning of Annie seemed to affect her spirits, and Ames proposed a flying visit to his friends in the city of C——.

So one day he told Annie to prepare for the journey, and as he always traveled by night, so they could be refreshed in the morning, at night-fall all was in readiness, and soon they were rattling over the railroad at a rapid rate.

Ames knew, by the jumping of the cars, that all was not right, and as Annie was nervous, he told her she had better sit up altogether, for he really feared an accident, and it was better to be pitched out with their eyes open, than to have them shut. Scarcely were the words spoken, than there came a fearful crash, and the cars were precipitated down a steep embankment. Fortunately, none in the car with them were injured, but the curses and groans of those in the smoking-car were frightful to hear.

When Ames found himself and wife uninjured, he was thankful indeed, and picked themselves up to look after those who were crying for help.

When they reached the cars that were smashed up, they witnessed a frightful sight. There were great hearty men, who were full of life an hour before, now lying so mangled that one could scarcely tell they were human beings.

The bodies of the injured were carefully taken from the ruins and laid upon the grass, and the women became ministering angels to them then indeed. Many a rough man who had learned to curse, in this dark hour of fearful calamity learned to bless them, and could not bear his self-constituted nurse to leave him for a moment. The ladies even tore up their linen dusters to make bandages for the wounded.

Notwithstanding the attention and good nursing, some breathed their life away upon the cold ground ; but all had a tear of pity for their hard fate shed over them, as the women gently covered the staring corpse with a piece of cloth or handkerchief.

As Annie was moving away from a terrible-looking object, she heard a groan, and on turning her head, saw a beautiful boy of some fifteen summers. His great blue eyes seemed to follow her wherever

she went. At last she spoke to him, when he held out his hand and begged her to lift him up. She did so, and laid his beautiful head upon her lap, when he burst into tears, saying : " Oh, my father, my murdered father ! Now I am indeed an orphan ! I stand alone in the wide, wide world." She kissed his pure white brow. When Ames reached the spot, telling her to make ready for a speedy departure, she begged to let the boy go with them. Ames readily consented, willing to incur all expense, if the doctor said he could go.

The doctor gave his consent, and the orphan found friends in the amiable couple, who gave him every attention until they reached their destination, when he was placed in a luxuriant bed, and a physician called in, and with good, careful nursing, he soon recovered, but his benefactors would not hear of him leaving them.

When the news of Ames's arrival reached the club-room, the hotel was literally besieged with his old friends, who were overjoyed at shaking his hand once more.



CHAPTER XLVII.

THE MEETING WITH OLD FRIENDS.—MELANCHOLY
MEETING WITH HENRY DEBAR.



HEN Ames once more made his appearance at the club, he was received with enthusiasm. Toasts and speeches were the order of the evening. His bright smile seemed to be contagious, for every countenance beamed with delight, as they drank to the health and future happiness of the "prince of good fellows."

It was nigh unto day when they separated.

When Ames reached home, he found he had missed the familiar face of his old chum, Henry DeBar, and made up his mind to make a search for that prominent gentleman.

After partaking of a hearty breakfast, the next morning, Ames set off in the direction of the little brown cottage, which to his astonishment, he found closed, and the gate locked upon the inside. He

wended his way in disappointment to the carriage, and gave orders to drive to No. — Montgomery Street, which he reached in a little time, but was horrified upon alighting to find the house all closed, and a sash of black crape hanging from the door.

He hastily ascended the steps, rang the bell, and was admitted by the maid, who had just wiped the tears from her eyes with her apron, and sighed heavily when Ames inquired softly, why was the house in mourning.

“Oh, sir!” said Mary, bursting into tears, “did you not hear that Mr. Frank Hardy, who was coming from New York, was smashed up in that horrid old train? We are now expecting him to be brought up from the depot every minute.” And poor Mary refused to be comforted, for she had “loved the poor gentleman,” as she said, and would rather it should have been her worthless life, instead of his dear valuable one.

Just at this moment, Mrs. Sutton, thinking she heard a familiar voice, came from the back parlor, and upon seeing Ames Skiff, approached, extended her hand, but neither could speak for their emotion. Ames clasped her hand in silence, but she knew how much his great heart swelled with sympathy for her, by the bright tear that fell upon her hand, which he held.

At length she seemed to realize his awkward position, and led him to a room upon the second floor, where he found Henry trying to comfort little Maggie, who moaned : “ Oh, my uncle ! my dear, dear uncle ! Oh ! papa, I found—I found him ! and now God has taken him from me ! ” And the beautiful girl hid her face in his bosom, and screamed as though she would go into convulsions.

As Henry perceived Ames standing upon the threshold, he arose, with his precious burden still clinging to him, gave one hand to Ames in silence, while with the other, he was obliged to support the afflicted girl, who would not listen to words of comfort.

Our hero at length found voice, and inquired of Henry, if he could be of any service, to command him at once.

Henry gladly accepted his proffered services, and begged him to go to the depot at once and see what caused the delay in removing the corpse.

He departed immediately, with the shrieks of Maggie still ringing in his ears. At the front door he met Ernest, her brother, who, although he felt his loss keenly, bore up as bravely as a man.

The boy stepped up and placed his hand in that of the noble-hearted Ames, and said, in a trembling voice : “ Sir, may I go with you to bring my

uncle home?" and the answer being in the affirmative, he sprang into the carriage and soon they found themselves at the depot, where they could scarcely make their way through the crowd of weeping women and children, who were searching among the boxes for their loved ones. Each rough coffin had the name of the occupant upon it. Our friends soon found what they sought, when they procured a bier, and engaged four strong men to convey it to the house of mourning.

They again entered the carriage, and was driven to the undertaker's, to make immediate preparation for the funeral. When they reached the house there was a crowd about the door waiting for the corpse to arrive.

Presently the heavy tramp of the pall-bearers was heard, and all raised their hats and stood in silence until the rough box was borne into the darkened parlor, and the undertaker followed. When the body was exposed to view, Ames started back, for he recognized one whose ghastly features his wife had covered with her handkerchief, for there was the identical handkerchief with her initials in a corner. He groaned aloud, saying: "Oh, why did I leave him alone? Why did I not bring the noble remains with me?"

It was truly heart-rending to see the grief of

Maggie when her uncle's corpse was brought in. She broke away from Henry and threw herself upon the rough box, called her uncle by every endearing name, and begged him just to smile upon her and speak to her once more; and then she put her ear down and seemed to await his answer, and when she found he could not answer she would cling around the box and make the stoutest heart ache with her piteous appeals and screams. This was the second time Maggie had seen her loved ones snatched away by the ruthless hand of death.

In two days after, the mutilated remains of the once handsome Frank Hardy were consigned to his lonely, narrow bed in the beautiful cemetery.

When the minister said, "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes," every hat was lifted in respect to the dead.

A terrible shriek rent the air, and Maggie flew by the terrified group, and threw herself upon the coffin in the grave. In a moment more, the form of our hero was seen with the bleeding and inanimate girl in his arms. He bore her through the crowd, and placed her gently in the arms of him who had rescued her from starvation, and was now her only earthly father and protector.

At this outburst of grief, none could restrain their tears; even strong men, who were unused to

weep, sobbed aloud. One alone stood like he was petrified ; that was the noble-hearted Henry, who held her in his arms and gazed upon her bleeding form as though his heart was rent in twain.

He was aroused from his stupor by Ames, who led him to his carriage, when the gentle Annie accompanied them to the house, and consoled them with sweet words of comfort.

Soon Maggie was made as comfortable as possible, but fever set in, and it was many weeks before she recovered sufficiently to know the silent watcher by her side. Such was the devotion of Henry, that when Maggie came back from the verge of the grave, he was scarcely more than a shadow of his former self.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MYSTERY OF MAGGIE'S BIRTH SOLVED.—THE
HEIRESS.

ONE cold, rainy day in October, three years after the death of Frank Hardy, a woman closely veiled entered the office of Henry DeBar, placed a letter in his hand, and left as mysteriously as she had come. Henry very complacently broke the seal, and two photographs fell to the floor. He picked them up and gazed long upon the face of Ashton Moore, the other was that of a stranger, but Maggie had the same look out of the lovely blue eyes, and the same mischievous smile around the mouth. Henry was puzzled, to say the least, and naturally turned to the letter for explanation. He would first look at the letter, and then he would throw it down and gaze intently upon each face in turn. 'Tis true Henry

had some queer thoughts about Ashton Moore's early life. Finally, he threw aside the pictures and read the letter. It ran thus :

“MR. HENRY DEBAR : *Dear Sir* :—As I am now upon the verge of eternity, I disclose my infamy in keeping this secret from you. Years ago, two noble boys (twins) were given to my care with an immense fortune, when their parents were cut off in the hey-day of life by that fearful scourge, yellow-fever, in New Orleans.

“Well, I was childless, and gave one of the boys to the world, and the other I kept, with his fortune, to myself. When he was only seventeen years old (he was large for his age, and was exceedingly handsome and manly) he formed an attachment, from his early boyhood, with a lovely child of a poor neighbor, and amid strong opposition, this smouldering fire leaped out in a fearful flame, that proved their own destruction, for the boy, who had an account at bank, drew it, and the result was a grand elopement of the children, the girl was but fifteen and the boy not yet seventeen. After an ineffectual attempt to gain possession of the children, we gave up in despair.

“Some few years ago, we found some trace of the widow and children of my noble Walter Ashton Moore ; he was named after his father, but dropped

the 'Moore,' and went by the name of Ashton, to escape detection.

"When I heard of the family, they were in abject poverty, and of course, would only have been a burden to me. The next thing I heard, was that you had taken them under your protection, and I, as a demon, rested satisfied, until I was stricken down by the hand of an avenging God. Now, sir, if you go to the Merchants' Bank, you will find an account in the name of Walter A. Moore, which I have bequeathed in my will to the children of said W. A. Moore, and that furthermore that the twin brother is known by the name of Ashton Moore, and said Ashton Moore has papers to the effect that he has a twin brother; therefore, I enclose the likeness of both father and mother to substantiate my dying statement. I hereby declare that, Ernest Ashton, with his two sisters, Maggie and Lulu, are the legitimate children, and lawful heirs of Walton Ashton Moore, and may God bless and keep them as he has heretofore is the dying wish of

" MARCUS B. CLINTON,

" Guardian of Walter Ashton Moore."

"So my Maggie has found a relative for the one she has lost," said Henry, as he carefully

folded the valuable document, and placed it in his inside pocket, and wended his way to the hotel of Ames, to consult with that gentlemen, who was glad that he was so near to the little gifted Maggie.

When Henry found everything was correct, which was stated in the letter, and the miserable wretch was dead and almost forgotten, he broke the news to the children, who were delighted at the thought of having a cousin, and that, too, in the handsome Ashton.

Upon Maggie's birthday, her adopted father presented her with two handsome portraits—one of her mother and the other her father, when all declared that Ashton Moore must have sat for it.

When Ashton arrived three months after, he was indeed proud to own the handsome blue-eyed girl, who modestly let him take her in his strong arms, and cover her blushing face with kisses, but one stood apart whose bosom swelled with emotion, and that one was none other than our old friend Milton Smith, who, although old enough to be Maggie's uncle, wished that he could be something nearer.



CHAPTER XLIX.

MILTON SMITH'S REWARD.



YEARS rolled on, and Milton Smith had gained a great suit in law, and was receiving the congratulations of his friends in the court room, when he encountered a pair of bewitching blue eyes filled with happy tears, and as her father, Henry DeBar, led her forward to press the hand of the eloquent and successful lawyer, who had been his companion for years, she timidly and blushinglly put forth her hand, which he grasped, and blushed like a girl.

Henry saw that his jewel was loved by a man who was every way worthy of her, and whom he would trust to the end of the world. Some days after, Milton called at the office and demanded the hand of the beautiful daughter of Henry in marriage, who grasped his friend by the hand, saying : "Take her, my boy, and may you be happy!" Thus was the honest lawyer rewarded.

As he was turning away, he said: "Henry, I have one more favor to ask. Will you give Ernest a junior partnership in our firm?"

"No!" said Henry, "he is now being fitted out to enter West Point, for he has chosen a military life, and I will be proud of my soldier boy yet; be satisfied with what you have got; do not, I beg of you, try to rob me of all!"

"Nay, *not all*, Henry, for you have another sweet blossom in little Lulu, whom you will have to give away one of these days." So the two friends parted.





CHAPTER L.

THE GOAL OF HIS AMBITION REACHED.

 I AM mighty glad that somebody has taken hold of this old road, and made it what it is now, for really I did dread the hazardous undertaking of jogging over the famous Erie Railroad—famous only for its slaughter of human life.

“ Oh ! with what a different feeling one can enter the grand palace car now. Why, I can disrobe for the night and feel as secure as when I am in my bed at home,” and so saying the corpulent old gentleman took off his spectacles and turned the seat, then stretched himself out to take a comfortable nap, for, as he had told his neighbors, he did not apprehend the least danger, so secure did he rest in the belief that a master hand held the reins of the iron horse.

Who was this prince of the road ? Why, none

other than the ambitious country youth who had ventured from his mountain home to rein in the fiery horses of Van Amburgh's circus. From one round of the ladder he has stepped upon the other until now he is up at the top. And moreover, in his conquering march he has won many hearts by his noble bearing and gentle, womanly heart, with his lion's strength. Even here it is put before a wondering world—he makes humanity his study. Ah! the recollection of that railroad slaughter is ever before his eyes. Had it not been for carelessness, his noble friend, Frank Hardy, would be here to celebrate his triumph. And yet, our hero grasps one thing more; he thinks there ought to be, for the comfort of the poorer masses, floating palaces, as the *Granville*, on the Mississippi, and forthwith he fits up the great *Arctic*. Who but the prince of good fellows would think of getting up such a splendid craft for the good of the poorer classes, the elegant hangings and the solid furniture and splendid mirrors, so all can have a glimpse of the grandeur this world contains, and which is within the grasp of every enterprising young American; for mind you, this man has made his own fortune, young as he is. And proud indeed ought the parents of such a son to be. Young men! the avenue of enterprise and wealth is open to you as

well as it was to him. He had exalted ideas, and now he realizes all his boyhood thought of.

It is this real hero that my story commences with. He has always held an iron rein over himself as well as over his team, and his motto has always been, "Never turn back."





CHAPTER LI.

CONCLUSION.

IN the corner of — Avenue and — Street, looms up to view a magnificent marble building. We take a peep inside. There are grand broad marble staircases and grand ante-rooms, where groups are standing waiting to be summoned to his august presence. Presently a glass door is thrown open, and the usher announces you. You feel like you were in the presence of the President of the United States ; but fear not, it is simply our hero ; these are his working hours ; business is business with him ; you tell him your business and are speedily dispatched, for he has hundreds waiting and his time is precious. He bows you out in great style. Mind, whatever he undertakes is done in the most urbane manner, for he has great regard for the feelings of every one ; has he not come through all grades of life ?

Now, again we catch a parting glimpse of our hero. He is tendered a commission. What is it? Ah! he is unanimously voted a military commander. Our hero accepts the honorable position, and forthwith spends his money freely to make his regiment second to none in the service. As they parade through the streets, ladies wave their dainty handkerchiefs and men wave their hats, and tremendous shouts rend the air. Now, as he has his foot upon the topmost round of the ladder, let us shout with the multitude a hearty shout for young America.

THE END.

